

Macháček, Josef

Adult education in Czechoslovakia

Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. B, Řada filozofická.
1973, vol. 22, iss. B20, pp. [77]-86

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/106588>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

JOSEF MACHÁČEK

ADULT EDUCATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The title of my contribution is to some extent misleading. It is not concerned with analysing various forms of activity in the field of extra-curricular education in Socialist Czechoslovakia, and still less does it offer an enumeration of the organizations and institutions which participate in this activity; on the contrary it is concerned to apply the results so far gained for application to the theory of adult education.

On the other hand, it is precisely this theoretical intention which forbids me to select for my paper a more "theoretical" and apparently more appropriate title — for example On the scientific conception of andragogy or In what way does adult education differ from education of the young? I shall also answer these questions, but as will be clear from what follows, my answer is so very different from the usual opinion of the majority of specialists who deal with these problems that I would scarcely venture to present it, if I were not able to base it on proofs derived from educative (school and extra-curricular) practice rather than on those derived from the theory of education.

This does not mean that I give preference to a narrow practical outlook or that I conceive theory and scientific knowledge merely as a mechanical generalization of practical experiences. The role of practice here is to confirm my theoretical conclusions, and in no sense to be a substitute for them; and of course practice is itself the material which I am trying to treat theoretically. The actual point of departure for these conclusions is Marxist theory, which is also the starting point for the basic conception of my entire contribution.

For if I suppose that more or less casually and variously described and interpreted differences between the child and the adult, or between school and extra-school education, in no way suffice to justify the existence of an independent and generally recognized andragogy, then I am really only in concrete form expressing the general Marxist observation that a historical and class content must be sought for also in such concepts, which appear to be given as it were once and for all and to remain unchangeable. It is certainly of significance to speak of intellectual, moral, aesthetic education, and so forth, or of the education of young people and of adults, but always and solely within the context of education under the system

of slavery, under the feudal system, under the bourgeois system and under socialism, but never to speak of education in general. Finally, too, even within the same socio-economic formation there exist differences in cultural tradition, in standard of life, in social, political and economic conditions, which regularly modify the character of the young and of the adult as well as the relationship between them. Education itself (the educational system) is then the expression of the relationships between people, an expression of the historically conditioned cultural, political and in the final instance, economic structure of society. Only — and this is a further conclusion drawn from Marxist theory and sufficiently tested by socialist practice — there does not at all follow from this any denial of the scholarly approach to adult education, nor a relative attitude to scientific knowledge.

Of course much depends on what we understand by a scientific conception of education. Anyone who identifies the scientific treatment of the problems of man and his relationship to other people with the quest for a class-surmounting, non-ideological, ever-valid answer to the questions of what is personality, the good, happiness, the meaning of life, etc., will most probably formulate in the field of educational theory an abstract picture of some ideal aim of education and ideal circumstances for its attainment, and thus, too, will provide the prerequisite condition for formulating a general and "objective" science of pedagogics. Nevertheless his theory, cut off from the real needs and interests of the actual man struggling to achieve actual happiness and actual freedom, will at the most have the value of a utopian "theory", regardless of the fact that in practice, directly or indirectly, it will further the interests and needs only of concrete people linked to a social system no less actual and concrete. There is also possible another, equally non-marxist conception of a scientific approach to education: its conscious recruitment to the service of non-communist, even anti-communist commitment — to the fight against Marxism and Communism not in the name of pure and anti-ideological science, but in the name of what is termed Western civilization and Western traditions, in the name of the liberal conception of the freedom and individuality of man. And there are of course also possible further variations of these conceptions; what however is not possible, is their combination with the Marxist-Leninist conception of a scientific approach to education in some kind of classless unity.

Why do I lay so much stress on the incompatibility of the Marxist and non-Marxist conception of the scientific approach to adult education? It certainly is not for the purpose of proceeding to demonstrate the correctness of the first and incorrectness of the second, nor is it in order to give an a priori rejection of all the arguments of those who on the other hand consider their own opinion to be correct and the Marxist conception to be the expression of false knowledge. I simply want to recall that in the theory of education, which cannot be constructed without an apparatus composed of such concepts as "the educative and moral goal", "the integrity of the personality", "interests", "needs", "values", etc., nor can the contradiction between two hostile viewpoints be bridged over if only because each of these concepts has a different significance for the Marxist

and for the non-Marxist. I am therefore of the opinion that it is more appropriate for us in the first instance to confront these two viewpoints, instead of seeking for some general scientific definition of andragogy, acceptable to all. The mutual and open exchange of opinions, even though carried on from antithetical positions, is in any case more fruitful and advantageous for every scientific investigation than any stressing "among colleagues" of shared opinions and playing down "among colleagues" of contradictory opinions.

The following remarks offer a short contribution towards such a confrontation. They are thus not an attempt to answer the question which forms the central issue of these "Discussions", but an attempt to answer a much more modest question: What are the principles on which the unified system of extra-school education in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is based and what conclusions can be drawn from these principles and from the practice which corresponds to them, in order to define more exactly the very concept of "scientific approach" in the "scientific conception of andragogy".

The extra-school education of the citizens of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is an organic component of the process which, continuing from education in the school, and in harmony with it, seeks to achieve aims which will correspond both to the interests and needs of individuals and also to the interests and needs of the entire society. These aims follow from the policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the field of cultural and educative activity, are treated at length and reasons for them are adduced in Party resolutions and other Party documents, but their detailed specification and practical realization is left in the hands of the individual organs and organizations, which in their entirety form a differentiated, but nevertheless unified base for extra-school education, systematic and based on a long-time perspective. One of the most important organizations which is active in this sector, has formulated its tasks, for example, in this way:

"Extra-school education... sets out with the purpose of giving, completing or extending education so that the individual should understand the whole matter as well as its interconnections, so as to be able in his particular branch to achieve creative work and also to be otherwise active. Extra-school education participates in the preparation of the individual as citizen and as active participant in political life, as a worker, as an educator of the next generation, and also seeks to lead to a cultural employment of free time, to the creation of a healthy regime of work and leisure and in its final results of a socialist way of life. Its content, then, is based on the perspective of the development of socialist society and of the policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, on the basis of the economic development and needs of our society, of the development of science and technology, of the development of culture." (Document adopted by the Presiding Board of the Central Committee of the Socialist Academy of Czechoslovakia, 8th November, 1972.) In all forms of extra-curricular education (People's University, People's Academy, lectures, seminars, question panels and informal talks, film and TV programmes,

etc.) and without regard to the varied nature of their contents, the educative aim is directed towards achieving by education a philosophical outlook on the world, towards creating the moral and political character of a socialist individual. "The scientific philosophical outlook has... an integrative contentual and methodological function in extra-school education. It supplies the inner organic integrity, is the guarantee of general methodological and theoretical systematic character, and the condition, too, of the logical interconnection of all elements and forms of educative activity. Marxist-Leninist education is part of all the thematic groups of consistent forms of extra-curricular education" (ibid).

I could quote from other programmes and reports of other institutions and organizations (ranging from State and National ones attached to Ministries and the Central Trade Union Board, down to the Boards for extra-curricular education attached to Regional, District and Municipal Councils), and we should find that, throughout, the consistency of extra-school education is not merely a matter of the directive, co-ordinative and organizational function of the Party and those institutions common to the whole society which assist the Party in the education of the socialist individual, but that it is above all based on the principles which are common to all kinds of education and which give a unified meaning and aim to the wealth of different activity in this field.

The most important of these principles can be in my opinion characterized, firstly, as the principle of unity in education of young people and education of adults, and secondly, the principle of unity in the inculcation of knowledge and in upbringing, and thirdly, the principle of the unity of scientific approach and of committed approach in education. I do not assert that always and in all forms of extra-curricular education these postulates are successfully realized, nevertheless all of them are active, indicate the fundamental direction of all educational activity in our country, and their adequacy is also tested and confirmed by day-to-day educational practice.

Allow me now to explain more closely the nature of these principles and also to deduce the conclusions I have promised, which may perhaps be acceptable or at least suggestive even for those for whom the premises I take as my starting point are not.

1. Extra-curricular education in Czechoslovakia is fundamentally conceived as the education of young people and of adults: priority is even given to youth education. Not only those activities which supplement scholastic education, or which prepare secondary-school pupils for Higher and University education, but also various further courses, including more than one specialization, various discussion clubs, informal talks, etc. (as a rule prepared in co-operation with the Socialist Youth Movement or by the latter organization itself), are already of themselves the most effective use of spare time for young people, and at the same time a preparation for their permanent continuing education, the need for which is given by the increased accumulation of information and the demand for increased qualifications, as well as by the natural human desire to make the fullest possible realization of the personality. From this aspect the differ-

ences between the education of youth and the education of adults, between school and extra-school education are equalized; if at one time the school used to be a preparation for life, while life meant the end of compulsory school attendance, and so, too, the end of education (with the exception of the acquirement of the new and necessary knowledge required for employment), then today the school itself is already both life and work, while life outside the school does not cease to be school and learning. This however also means, that life cannot be divided into "real life" and the preparation for it, but that youth, maturity and age are merely different phases of the same life. In the same way education of young people and the education of adults are only different phases of the same process, two subsystems of the same educational system.

The principle of the unity of extra-curricular education of youth and adults, then, finds its theoretical rationalization in socialist practice — in the linking of school with life. We cannot divide adult education from youth education. Undoubtedly there exists a certain specific character of adult education in comparison with the education of young people; what is questionable is its identification with extra-school education in general, or placing it in opposition to school and youth education. Such a conception, in fact confusing extra-school education with post-school education (i.e. education after completion of compulsory school attendance), in addition ignores the mutual influence of school and extra-curricular education, as well as the "division of labour" between them, and not only in the sense that extra-curricular education is a kind of post-graduate study offering a substitute for an education which was not yet in existence in the school, but also in the sense that the school today already begins to transfer part of its tasks to extra-curricular education.

2. The unity of specialist content and its ideological direction, the unity of intellectual, emotional and moral education, the unity of theoretical knowledge and practical activity, the unity of thought and life — all this (and not only this) is included in the principle which stresses the indivisibility of the imparting of knowledge from the inculcation of behaviour.

There are nations, which — so far as language goes — are happy enough to be without the need to distinguish the two concepts. Thus in English, if I am not mistaken, the term "education" itself already includes both meanings: it is "teaching", "training", "schooling", "instructing" just as it is "education" in the sense of moral, aesthetic education, and so forth. Herbert Spencer, for example, in his *Essays on Education* (1861) entitles one of these essays "What knowledge is of most worth?" and the further three essays in this volume clearly show that Education means for him also what a German, for example, would term "Bildung" rather than "Erziehung". Czech and Slovak, too, are languages which preserve a sharp distinction between "vzdělání" (education in formal knowledge) and "výchova" (upbringing in principles or ways of behaviour): "vzdělání" signifies the extension and deepening of knowledge, "výchova" is the formation and transformation of the individual in all his relationships to the world, to other people, and to himself. On the other hand, we in the Czech and Slovak Republics can be glad that we are successfully and gra-

dually in practice overcoming the frontier between formal education and upbringing; formal education with no effect of upbringing, or upbringing not based on solid knowledge, is slowly losing credit both with those who until recently cultivated specialized knowledge for its own sake, and also with those "educators" who confused moral and political education with fruitless and demagogic moralizing.

Not only in school education, but also in extra-curricular, it is precisely the element of upbringing which is stressed. General scholastic education and preparation for a profession certainly do represent great values for everyone who acquires them, but even these important aims are subordinate to the higher aim spoken of before, namely the education of the individual human being, whose interests are in harmony with the interests of the entire society, an education which teaches him to employ reasonably all his abilities towards achieving the happiness of himself and of others. Thus in this direction, in our country, too, "the development of the personal integrity is conceived as the aim and the purpose of adult education (Prof. B. Samolovchev), in our country, too, "the socialization of man... (is) the central issue of such an educational activity". The education of adults, however, is not in our country either the way to the integrity of the "contemporary" individual, nor is it a "socio-pedagogical" compensation.

What then is it? — It is education towards a conception of the world. And since a "conception of the world" without a class identification is just as vague a concept as that of the "contemporary individual", we must immediately add: it is socialist education.

3. If we understand by "conception of the world" (philosophical outlook, world view) not merely a sum of observed knowledge, but also all the emotional, voluntary, moral and evaluatory attitudes in which our relationship to the world and to life is expressed, then the all-round education of the individual is in fact nothing else than the formation, expansion and deepening of his world view. Perhaps this conception may seem too wide, but in practice we all recognize and apply it. If for example we evaluate an individual, his personality, the integrity of his personality, what we term his way of life, we in fact are evaluating his theoretical, practical and evaluatory orientation, his philosophical conception of the world. Even a one-sided assessment of people ("Tell me what you read, with whom you associate, what your home life is like... and I'll tell you what you are.") is an evaluation of a philosophical conception of the world, or it may be of individual aspects and attitudes of this conception from the viewpoint of our own outlook.

However, an evaluation of philosophical conception and of education towards a philosophical conception of the world may also be one-sided, and is so even if we take as our starting-point the "equation": the individual equals the outlook, the education of the individual is an education towards the outlook, but, while applying the otherwise correct maxim "Tell me what is your philosophical outlook on the world..." we limit ourselves, as one might say, to the mere, even if very objective and critical answer of the individual interrogated, without knowing or taking into

consideration how his outlook is expressed in his everyday life, in his work, in his relationships to people and things. The same is true of education towards a philosophical world view. It is bound to be onesided, if we concentrate only on the development of certain features and certain abilities or if we consider the conception of the world itself to be a certain and after all only an intellectual picture of the world and of life, which can be acquired in the same way as any other piece of knowledge. Education towards a world outlook, then, is not merely one of many forms of educations, it is not a component of some kind of education in general (such a view permeates even the above-quoted document), but on the contrary all the other "educations" are its components, and form its content.

I must leave aside a number of further and very interesting implications, linked with this initial conception of a world outlook, but nevertheless, even although I should be glad to return now to consideration of what follows from it for education, I cannot refrain from speaking first of the most important features of every outlook on the world. That is, its historical nature. A world outlook in general does not exist, there exist only world outlooks which are the reflection of the thought and evaluation of the time in question, and in a class society, of class thought and evaluation, a reflection which in the minds, hearts and actions of individuals takes on various forms, but, however, basically always reflects the material and spiritual situation of a given epoch, or, it may be, class. We live in century whose climate of world outlook appears to be very variegated, but nevertheless a more detailed analysis would show that alongside the socialist and bourgeois conceptions (the latter of which has two main variants, liberal democratic and fascist, expressing the progressive and the decadent phases of development of capitalism) there are still existing on our planet the world conceptions of the feudal system, the slave system, and the most primitive social system, and that not only in the form of out-dated relics (for example, religions), but also as the reflection of still existing feudal, slave and primitive social life in certain lands and tribes. If we leave out of consideration various anarchistic and other varieties of these world conceptions and if we recall the fact that every educational system (as a social system) sets out, in fixing its aims and methods, from the already-mentioned material (economic) and intellectual situation of its time, then it should be clear that in what are called the most advanced countries of our world there exist only two main educational systems: education in the spirit of socialism (and towards socialism) and education in the spirit of capitalism, proletarian education and bourgeois education.

In any case it is quite obvious that a socialist society fixes its educational aims in harmony with the world conception of the working class and that thus education towards a world outlook in a socialist state is a socialist education, an education ignoring abstract models of the ideal individual or of ideal freedom, but on the other hand it is an education which leads the concrete individual towards an ever increasing freedom (to an ever-increasing "lordship" over nature and over himself) and to responsibility towards it. It is equally obvious that the fight for a socialist world outlook is at the same time a fight against conceptions which are in conflict with it, and so far as education is concerned, a fight against conceptions which

— albeit in the name of science — proclaim the “classless” educational aims of the bourgeoisie.

And finally it is also obvious that the education of adults in socialist countries is equally the education of the socialist individual, by the formation, development and deepening of his scientific conception of the world. The objection that it is precisely this aim which is in contradiction to science and that it excludes the possibility of constituting a unified scientific andragogics, is unacceptable. Of course there is a contradiction here — the contradiction between socialist and bourgeois education — but what reasons are there to support the thesis that only bourgeois education is scientific? Is perhaps the bourgeois conception of the world less class conditioned, less committed than is the socialist? Is not the very fact that every world outlook is a synthesis of cognition and evaluation, idea and ideal, theory and practice, a proof of the fact that we shall not succeed in adequately characterizing it by employing the conception of a science which ignores values, ideas and practice? Is it the fault of the Marxists that non-Marxists for the most part see contradictions where none exist? — between natural science and social science, between science and ideology — and that therefore they usually do not even recognize the social sciences as sciences?

If evaluation and ideology do not have their place in science, then not even non-Marxist pedagogy is science, for not even it can do without ideology and evaluatory aims and criteria. And if we conceive the scientific approach in education in such a way that it is not in contradiction to the objective cognition of the world, in such a way that its aims are deduced from observed knowledge of the laws of social development, is it not only the Marxist conception of education, however it may stress its commitment, which can plead the right to that adjective, which “non-party” pedagogues and ideologists are so fond of claiming as their own?

But why continue discussing questions to which we cannot find a common answer, precisely because we are divided by our different conceptions of the world?

The unity of the scientific character and of the committed character of education eliminates any compromise between conceptions which would aim at contradictory educational goals, but does not, however, eliminate the possibility of discussion, even of mutual comprehension and understanding, so far as the conception “ideological struggle” is concerned in this field. It is well known that for example the criticism of religion in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is not a criticism of the believers; that what is termed the fight against religion is a fight on behalf of the believer, a fight to gain him for such a conception of life as will render him more independent, happier and more free than does a belief in a supernatural power. It is also well known that the fight for socialism is not a fight for some sort of institutions, for a socialist state, for a worker's party, for a socialist society detached from real people, but a fight for the concrete individual, for the application of all his abilities and for the realization of his really human needs and interests. It is, however, also well known that by far the greatest majority of all scientists

in the world, without regard to their conception of the world, to the position which they make the starting-point of their work and their life, seek similar goals: to further the humanization of man. Differences in the interpretation of this humanization are certainly great; hopes of attaining unity in the key ideological questions practically non-existent, so far as we do not betray our own conception of the world, so far as we do not become different people. And yet in spite of this, the fact I have mentioned, that we are all seeking a way to an ever more human future, must fill us with optimism; we Marxists must be optimistic in the sense that non-Marxists will find their way to us, and non-Marxists at the very least in the sense that they will feel a greater certainty that the ideological fight, as understood by Marxists, is not a fight against people, but a fight for the truth, for good and beauty in the life of man. Nor does the ideological fight render impossible the further development of co-operation: exchange of experience in teaching methods, exchange of books popularizing scientific knowledge and of teaching material, mutual acceptance of results in sector of knowledge, co-operation in the solution of certain problems.

It is a pity that we do not yet live in a time which would permit the unified conception of the formation of the human individuality and its scientific explanation, on the other hand the time, in which we live, does permit us to confront our viewpoints, a confrontation which no longer need be a supplement or a substitute for a "cold war", but can be our specific contribution towards peace. Most of the wars in the history of this planet were waged in the name of truth, even although the true causes were different. It would seem that the real fight for truth, even if carried on with the greatest determination and thoroughness, is the only noble kind of "war" which remains for mankind, if we are to avoid inhuman and senseless bloodshed.

Translated by Jessie Kocmanová

VÝCHOVA DOSPĚLÝCH V ČESKOSLOVENSKU

Příspěvek je pokusem o odpověď na otázku: Na jakých principech spočívá systém mimoškolského vzdělávání v ČSSR a jaké důsledky lze z těchto principů a jim odpovídající praxe vyvodit pro upřesnění samotného pojmu „vědeckost“ ve „vědecké koncepci andragogiky“? Nejdůležitější z těchto zásad, které jsou v ČSSR společné pro všechny druhy vzdělávání a které veškeré činnosti v této oblasti dávají jednotný smysl a cíl, charakterizuje autor jako: 1. princip jednoty výchovy mládeže a výchovy dospělých, 2. princip jednoty vzdělávací a výchovné činnosti, 3. princip jednoty vědeckosti a stranickosti ve výchově.

Zejména třetí princip – spolu s předpokladem, že komplexní výchova člověka není nic jiného než vytváření, rozšiřování a prohlubování světového názoru („světovým názorem“ se rozumí nejen úhrn poznatků, ale také všechny citové, volní, morální a hodnotové postoje, v nichž se projevuje vztah člověka k světu a životu) – vylučuje jakýkoli kompromis mezi pojetími, které straní protikladným výchovným cílům, vylučuje proto také možnost jednotné koncepce formování lidské osobnosti a jejího vědeckého zdůvodnění (rozdílný přístup k samostatnému pojetí vědeckosti je také důsledek antagonismu mezi socialistickým a buržoazním světovým názorem), nevylučuje však další rozvoj spolupráce v oblasti výchovy dospělých, např. výměnu zku-

šeností o vyučovacích metodách, výměnu učebních pomůcek a knih popularizujících vědu, vzájemné přejímání dílčích poznatků, společné řešení některých problémů atd.

Referát byl – a to ve zkráceném znění – uveřejněn také v časopisu „Andragogija“. Autor jej předtím (v červenci 1973) přednesl na mezinárodní konferenci v Poreči (Jugoslávie); předmětem „Mezinárodních andragogických rozhovorů“ bylo právě téma „Vědecké pojetí andragogiky“.