

THE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL THINKING OF J.A. COMENIUS

I. Grontsova, Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) belongs to the most important persons in the European culture, philosophy, theology and in particular pedagogy. Comenius was the founder of the educational system, it is to his credit that pedagogy became independent and singled out from the framework of philosophy. With his works, he laid foundations of several pedagogical sciences, in particular the didactics, theory of education, pre-school education, education organisation and management and other. However, his work has also a strong socio-pedagogical aspect, so far insufficiently studied from the point of view of social pedagogy and in particular pedagogy of social care as its part.

The paper describes a fruitful contribution of J.A. Comenius in the development of social and educational conceptions of reality. It presents several periods of socio-pedagogical ideas developed by J.A. Comenius.

The first period (until 1620) is characterized by the criticism of social inequalities. In the second period (1620–1627) J.A. Comenius developed social pedagogy for orphans. The third period (1627–1641) is characterized by the development of the theory of universal knowledge. During this period, J.A. Comenius developed the idea that education is a means of development and social improvement of both man and the world. It took place in England (1641–1642). Next, the fifth period (till 1656) is the reformist one when J.A. Comenius expressed the idea of education as a basis for transformation of the inner world of man, society and the entire social world. The sixth period (1671–1879) is characterized by the idea of the feasibility of the general education and the search for the young social forces that are able to change the social world. The socio-pedagogical ideas of J.A. Comenius were not further developed and they can be considered as a factor in the development of modern social pedagogy.

Keywords: John Amos Comenius, social pedagogy, socio-pedagogical thinking of J.A. Comenius.

The educators of social pedagogy in Czech Republic and Slovakia include the work and thoughts of J.A. Comenius in the prehistory of Social Pedagogy and draw inspiration from it for its current development. However, these contributions are so far sporadic, but inspiring.

In his book *“Základy sociální pedagogiky” (Foundations of Social Pedagogy)* [8], in the first chapter *“Z historie sociální pedagogiky” (From the History of Social Pedagogy)*, the most distinguished contemporary researcher of social pedagogy in Czech Republic B. Kraus [3, 8] points out the contribution of J.A. Comenius to social pedagogy saying that Comenius understood education as a means of human cultivation and as a tool to improve the world. He also draws attention to Comenius’ social feeling in access to education and Comenius’ opinion that education should be provided to all without difference in their status or gender. He also mentions the contribution of Comenius’ work *“Informatórium školy materskej” (School of Infancy)* to social pedagogy, giving great importance to the educational influence of environment on man.

A theoretical discourse on the influence of Comenius’ work on social pedagogy can be found also in the work *“Jan Amos Komenský.*

Odkaz kultuře vzdělávání” (John Amos Comenius. Legacy to the Culture of Education) [12, c. 177–185], where J. Semrád and M. Škrabal address the contribution of J.A. Comenius to social pedagogy in the chapter *“Odkaz Komenického sociální pedagogice” (Comenius’ Legacy in Relation to Social Pedagogy)*. The authors state: “We see the basis of thoughts linked with social pedagogy in Comenius’ opinions on social tasks of school and on the teacher’s cooperation with pupils and cooperation of pupils with one another as the basis of the upbringing and educational process in class” [12, c. 180]. Also, J. Semrád and M. Škrabal see Comenius’ contribution to the development of social pedagogy in the following areas [11, c. 182]:

- 1) Concept of education as an instrument of social development;
- 2) Emphasis on school as a social organisation contributing to social learning;
- 3) Pansophy and upbringing related concept of education as an instrument of social unification and international communication;
- 4) Concept of universal human culture;
- 5) Concept of creativity in the world of human labour;
- 6) Implementation of Comenius’ intent in

contemporary practice of upbringing and education in integrating Europe.

Also M. Procházka pays considerable attention to J.A. Comenius, in his monograph "*Sociální pedagogika*" (Social Pedagogy) [10] in the chapter "*J.A. Comenius jako inspirace pro sociálně-pedagogické myšlení*" (J.A. Comenius as Inspiration for Social Pedagogical Thinking). In M. Procházka's opinion [10, c. 24] Comenius' work offers inspiration to social pedagogy in the following areas:

- a. Education power and its potential for transformation of society;
- b. Democratic character of upbringing and education;
- c. Accent on the social role of school environment;
- d. Comprehensive concept of society improvement through education.

With regard to Comenius' socio-historical as well as conceptual development, according to D. Čapková [1, c. 43] his philosophical-educational work may be divided into 6 periods. In these periods his works were considerably influenced by the 17th century social and political development which left deep imprints in them. However, in addition to educational, religious, philosophical and other aspects, one can find also socio-pedagogical thinking in Comenius' works from each of the periods.

The **First Period** covers the beginning of his activity up to 1620 (or 1624 including his studies abroad), which his encyclopaedic and national-educational works are typical of. The works "*Theatrum universitatis rerum*" (The Theatre of All Things), "*Linguae Bohemicae thesaurus*" (Thesaurus of the Czech Language) and other may be included there. From the point of view of social pedagogy, his work "*Listové do nebe*" (Letters to Heaven) is interesting, published in 1619 as his first printed work. Comenius criticized social injustice and sided with the poor there.

The **Second Period** (1620–1627). His work was marked by the events of that period, namely by the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, victory of Habsburgs in the Battle of White Mountain and counter-reformation, resulting in persecution of Czech non-Catholics. In this period, Comenius didn't find the way out from the "labyrinth of the world" yet and that was why his works had marks of the social and his personal tragedy (his second wife with children died) and are called the works of the First Consoling Period, or "*Consoling Works*". These works were intended to

console unfortunate persecuted Czech protestants and other suffering people. They had a distinct social critical content. They included: "*Labyrint světa a ráj srdce*" (The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart), "*O sirobě*" (About Poor People), "*Pres Božím*" (Press of God), "*Truchlivý*" (The Mournful) and other. From the point of view of social pedagogy, the writing "*O sirobě*" (About Poor People) is of particular interest. J.A. Comenius' thought about man overcoming difficult situations in life is particularly inspiring for social pedagogy. The activation of man's own powers and "*self-help*" concept belongs to the key principles of social pedagogy since its origination. In social pedagogy, the problems of orphanhood belong to the key areas of its interest, especially in German and Polish social pedagogy and, thus, the Comenius' writing "*O sirobě*" (About Poor People) should be of greater inspiration also for contemporary Slovak social pedagogy, despite the fact that Slovak legislation does not enable activities of social educators at children homes.

In this period Comenius found a fix point only in taking refuge to God and retreating from this world. This period is denoted as the "*Pre-Pansophic Period*" (of pre-universal knowledge), when J.A. Comenius stood in positions of medieval passivity.

The Third Period (1628–1641) covers Comenius' first stay in Leszno where he wrote the most important pedagogical works of didactic nature and began to develop the idea of pansophy, thus, universal knowledge, from which the name of this period is derived – the *Pansophic Period* of his work. It includes the works "*Didaktika česká*" (The Bohemian Didactic), "*Brána jazyků otevřená*" (The Gate of Languages Unlocked) and "*Informatorium školy mateřské*" (School of Infancy), written as parts of a more widely conceived work "*Ráj český*" (The Bohemian Paradise). They were to serve the needs of the Czech nation and improvement of the Czech society. In that period, Comenius already considered education an important factor of man's personality development and society improvement. It is obvious that Comenius had left the medieval passivity, typical of the previous period, for the modern activity pursued especially under the influence of empirical philosophy, F. Bacon, J.L. Vives and other philosophers. The work of this period, which is of particular importance for social pedagogy, is "*Informatorium školy mateřské*" (School of

Infancy) where Comenius laid foundations for purposeful, systematic education of a man in a family, as children should be brought up following the proper standards of wisdom since infancy. *“All the main branches a tree is to have, the tree sprouts from its trunk already in the first years, thus later there is nothing else necessary but they grow. It is the same with man: “everything depends on the beginning; such is the importance of childhood. The meaningfulness or idleness of life is decided on at the beginning” [7].*

Comenius understood pre-school education as the foundation for human education, on which vernacular school was to build. Since its origination, social pedagogy has paid special attention to the re-education of children and youth, because of their failed upbringing in a family and at school. The efforts of social educators in the process of youth's reformation and re-socialization are very not always effective. In addition to *“Informatorium školy mateřské”* (School of Infancy), J.A. Comenius gave the rationale for proper pre-school education of children in a family also in *“Didactica magna”* (The Great Didactic) and *“Pampaedia”* (Universal Education) as follows:

5. The main reason is the consideration of universal reform.

6. All in all, our body, soul, morals, effort, speech, conduct are formed by education.

7. It is easier to educate than to re-educate as this foresighted care should come since childhood.

8. Thus, it saves efforts and time if we begin education on time.

Many ideas in *“Didactica magna”* (The Great Didactic) are also inspiring for social pedagogy. His idea that “if a man is to be produced it is necessary that he to be formed by education” (title of Chapter 6 of The Bohemian Didactic) and, also, the idea that the “reform of the world must begin with a reform of school and man” have a deep socio-pedagogical meaning. The socializing importance of education is obvious: *“...we are born not for ourselves alone, but for God and for our neighbour, that is to say for the human race. Thus, becoming seriously persuaded of the truth we will learn from our boyhood to desire and strive to be of service to as many as possible. Thus, would the good fortune of private and of public life be assured, since all men would be ready to work together for the common good and to help one another” [5].*

The Fourth Period (1641–1642) includes his short stay in England, where Comenius wrote the pansophistic treatise *“Via lucis”* (The Way of Light) where he formulated the thought, that education is not the goal but only the means for development science and improvement of the world and gave instructions how to overcome the fragmentation of sciences.

The Fifth Period (1642–1656) includes his stay in Elblag, Sárospatak and two short stays in Leszno. This period is denoted as the *Period of Reform*, because Comenius began to work on the extensive work *“De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica”* (General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human), he divided in seven parts: Panegersia (Universal Awakening), Panaugia (Universal Dawning), Pansophia (Universal Knowledge), Pampaedia (Universal Education), Panglottia (Universal Language Study), Panorthosia (Universal Reform), Panuthesia (Universal Admonition). From the point of view of social pedagogy, the works *Pampaedia* and *Panorthosia* are of special interest, where Comenius understands education as the basis of the effort of man, society and the world for a universal reform. In *Pampaedia*, he wrote: *“general corruption of the world begins in the roots. Therefore also the universal renewal of the world must begin from there...” All hope for universal reform depends on the first education. If it is good education, matching the standards of the truth and good, then it is not possible that those who undergo it, are not superior to others. The happiness of the whole life depends on it, too. Faults of the first education accompany man for the whole life. Therefore the first guard of the human race is in the cradle; what could be easily improved in childhood, becomes irreparable at the old age” [4].* From its origination, the attention of social pedagogy has focused especially on addressing and remedying educational problems in children and youth, while laying strong emphasis on the role of upbringing and education in this process. In this connection, it has placed special emphasis on socio-educational work with a dysfunctional family, which as a rule significantly contributes to the formation of deviant behaviour in children and youth. Such thoughts can already be found in *“Pampaedia”* (Universal Education) [4], where Comenius writes:

Axiom I: Neglect of education is the corruption of people, families, empires and of the whole world.

Axiom II: Faults developed in family later lead to difficulties at school, church and in the state.

To correct the faults in development of the young, Comenius recommends in his *"Didactica magna"* (The Great Didactic) proper education and upbringing, because "there is no more certain way under the sun for the raising of sunken humanity than the proper education of the young".

The work *"Panorthosia"* (Universal Reform) contains Comenius' thought that the *"reform of public affairs begins with a reform of school"* [6].

The Sixths period (1656–1670) covers Comenius' stay in Amsterdam, where he came after Leszno had been burnt in the Swedish-Polish war in 1656. The period in which Comenius lost his property and many works. He began to "glue the shards of broken vessels" again. Here he published his most important pedagogical treatises *"Opera didactica omnia"* (Writing on All Learning) and in 1658 his *"Orbis sensualium pictus"* (The Visible World in Pictures) was published for the first time. He was working also on additional sections of *"Consultatio catholica"* (General Consultation), which resulted in the treatise *"Clamores Eliae"* (The Exhortations of Elijah). There, he saw an international staff of scholars as new "Elijah", who, with assistance of enlightened rulers, would carry out the reform of the corrupted world. The treatise *"Unum necessarium"* (The One Thing Needful) is the philosophical testament of Comenius' work, where he expressed his longing for peace and harmonious unity of the world. He expressed the necessity of mutual assistance in his autobiographic writing *"Continuatio admonitionis fraternae..."* (Continuation of Brotherly Admonition) written at the end of his life as follows: "...we who participate in human nature are to help others, also participating in it" [7]. J.A. Comenius as a philosopher, educator, reformer, theologian and social thinker striving for "improvement of things human" [2, c. 3], is of great inspiration also for social pedagogy.

Social pedagogy among other things finds inspiring J.A. Comenius' approach to education based on the apparent democratic character and his view that upbringing and education should be provided to all without difference in their status. *"...not the children of the rich or of the powerful only, but of all alike, boys and girls, both noble and ignoble, rich and poor... should be sent to school"* [9, c. 71]. Similar views were also shown by the founder of the theoretical direction in social pedagogy P. Natorp in his book *"Democracy of Education"* [12], where Natorp required education to be provided to everybody by the level of his abilities, to all layers of the nation, while also demanding mitigation or elimination of class differences in education. The socio-pedagogical dimension of his work has not been sufficiently acknowledged at the theoretical level. Comenius' ideas of the interdependencies of upbringing and education with the reform of man and society and the universal reform of the world are the stimulus also for social pedagogy.

Conclusion

Comenius' pedagogical thoughts are timeless and they are a source of wisdom for many disciplines, but he also makes the modern society reflect on the issues of globalization and the admonition for the human race to grow wise. *"Because: Firstly, we are all seated in the great theatre of the world: every action here affects us all, because the sun provides the light and God the eyes to all. Secondly, we, the whole human race, are one kind, one blood, one family, one house: therefore just as a part helps its whole and any organ all other organs of the same body and every member of the family to another member of the same family, or, if he can, to the whole family: also we, who participate in the human nature, are to help others, also participating in it. Thirdly: God already at the beginning of creation entrusted every man with care of every neighbour"* [7]. The 17th century when Comenius lived bears many analogies with the present times.

References

1. Čapková D. *Testamentary of Thinking and Education of Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius)*. Praha, Academia, ČSAV, 1978. 256 p. (in Czech)
2. Galla K. *Introduction to the Sociology of Education*. Praha, SPN, 1967. 177 p. (in Czech)
3. Chocholová S., Pánková M., Steiner M. *Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius). Testamentary of Culture and Education*. Praha, Nakl. Academia, AV ČR, 2009. 832 p. (in Czech)
4. Hroncová J., Emmerová I. *Social Pedagogy*. Banská Bystrica, PF UMB, 2004. 280 p. (in Czech)

5. Hroncová J., Emmerová I., Walancik M. *Pedagogy of Social Care*. Banská Bystrica, PF UMB, 2011. 220 p. (in Czech)
6. Hroncová J., Emmerová I., Kraus B. *History of Social Pedagogy*. Banská Bystric, PF UMB, 2007. 212 p. (in Czech)
7. Hroncová J., Emmerová I., Kraus B. *From the History of Social Pedagogy in Europe*. Ústí nad Labem, UJEP, 2008. 212 p. (in Czech)
8. Hroncová J., Emmerová I., Walancik M. *Pedagogy of Social Care*. Banská Bystrica, PF UMB, 2011. 220 p. (in Czech)
9. Komenský J.A. *Pansophia*. Bratislava, Obzor, 1992. 272 p. (in Czech)
10. Komenský J.A. *Great Didactic*. Bratislava, SPN, 1991. 279 p. (in Czech)
11. Komenský J.A. *Pansortohsia*. In: *General Consultation of Reform of Human Affairs*. Praha, Svoboda, 1992. 597 p. (in Czech)
12. Komenský J.A. *About me*. Praha, Odeon, 1987. 383 p. (in Czech)
13. Marburger H. *Development and Concepts of Social Pedagogy*. München, Juventa Verlag, 1979. 190 p. (in Czech)
14. Natorp P. *Social Pedagogy*. Paderhorn, 1974. (in Czech)
15. Procházka M. *Social Pedagogy*. Praha, Grada, 2012. 208 p. (in Czech)
16. Pšenák J. *Foreword (In: Komenský J.A. "Pansophia")*. Bratislava, Obzor, 1992. (in Czech)
17. Schilling J. *Social Work. The Main Direction of Development of Social Pedagogy and Social Work*. Trnava, FZaSP TU, 1999, 272 p. (in Czech)
18. Váňa J. *The History of Pedagogy*. Bratislava, SPN, 1963. 375 p. (in Czech)

Received 25 April 2015

УДК 37.013
ББК 4466.01 + 4403

СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ ВОЗЗРЕНИЯ ЯНА АМОСА КОМЕНСКОГО

И. Гронцова

Университет Матейа Бела, г. Банска Быстрица, Словакия

Ян Амос Коменский (1592–1670) – один из выдающихся представителей Европейской культуры, философии, теологии и педагогики. Коменский был одним из основателей системы образования, благодаря ему педагогика стала отдельной областью знаний и самостоятельной наукой. В своих работах Ян Амос Коменский обосновал основы дидактики, теории педагогики, дошкольного обучения, организацию и управление образовательным процессом. Кроме того, в его работах особое внимание уделяется и социально-педагогическим аспектам образования – сфере малоизученной с точки зрения социальной педагогики и педагогики социальной помощи.

В статье показан неоднозначный, но плодотворный вклад Я.А. Коменского в развитие социально-педагогических представлений о действительности. Представлены несколько периодов развития социально-педагогических представлений Я.А. Коменского. Первый период до 1620 г. характеризуется написанием работ, в которых автор критикует социальное неравенство. Во второй период, до 1627 г. Я.А. Коменский развивает социальную педагогику для детей-сирот. Третий, пансофический период, до 1641 г. характеризуется разработкой теории универсального знания. В этот период Я.А. Коменский развивает идеи об образовании как средстве развития и социального совершенствования как человека, так и мира. Эта идея разрабатывается педагогом в четвертый период, во время пребывания в Англии (1641–1642 гг.). Следующий, пятый период, до 1656 г., является реформистским, когда

Я.А. Коменский выражает идеи об образовании как основы преобразований внутреннего мира человека, общества и всего социального мира. Для шестого периода (1671–1879 гг.) характерны провозглашение идеи о целесообразности всеобщего образования и поиск молодых общественных сил, которые способны исправить социальный мир. Социально-педагогические идеи Я.А. Коменского в дальнейшем были недостаточно разработаны и могут рассматриваться как фактор развития современной социальной педагогики.

Ключевые слова: Ян Амос Коменский, социальная педагогика.

Гронцова Иолана, профессор философии, кафедра педагогики, университет Матейя Бела (Банска Быстрица, Словакия), jolana.hroncova@umb.sk.

Поступила в редакцию 25 апреля 2015 г.

ОБРАЗЕЦ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

Grontsova, I. The socio-pedagogical thinking of J.A. Comenius / I. Grontsova // Вестник ЮУрГУ. Серия «Образование. Педагогические науки». – 2015. – Т. 7, № 3. – С. 16–21.

FOR CITATION

Grontsova I. The Socio-Pedagogical Thinking of J.A. Comenius. *Bulletin of the South Ural State University. Ser. Education. Educational Sciences*. 2015, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 16–21.