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The Community School As a Contemporary Concept in Education and Its Evolution in the Czech Republic

Introduction

In recent years, pedagogy as well as educational praxis have been required to critically respond to challenges such as managing intercultural conflict, appraising diversity in the educational environment, working to reduce social disenfranchisement, or securing equality of opportunity in education. In the context of global economic and social risks, processes of social exclusion and marginalization have become a pressing social problem, posing new questions of solidarity and recognition. Social inclusion is made more difficult by the fragmentation of community life, the use of di-social life strategies, and most importantly the failure of the social function of schools in furthering integration. In democratic societies, where the social contract is based on respecting diversity and accepting social responsibilities, all social actors including schools are expected to cultivate sensitivity to specific local context, living conditions, and general needs. The kind of school that fulfils these social requirements has been established in the recent international discourse of pedagogy as the community school concept. OECD outlines some possible scenarios of the future development of schooling, among which the community school model figures as the outcome strengthening the role of the school in society (rescholarization), unlike other scenarios which extrapolate the current circumstances and/or predict that the school's role will weaken (OECD, 2001; Kotásek, 2002).

Considering these complex issues, the concept of the community school can play a significant part in the future development of society and as such requires adequate theoretical consideration. This article outlines the community school concept as one of the predicted influences on knowledge

society, showcasing the present state of community schools in the Czech Republic in comparison to their history in the US and the UK. The issue of the community as well as the community school is first situated within the wider framework of the relevant specialist discourse in the text, complete with the results of selected international research into the topic and an investigation into the development of community schools in the Czech Republic. The article's conclusion then summarizes key findings and offers my perspective on the development of community schools.

The Community School in the Context of Social and Specialist Discourses

A renewed interest in the issues of community and community development has characterised the academic discourse of the past 20 years. Sociological and socio-philosophical aspects of the community as an entity connected by living conditions, lived experience, sensitivity, values, social relations, and shared perspectives have been reflected in theory (Baumann, 2006, Delanty, 2003, Gardner, 1999). The role of the community in pedagogy in (post)modern society, which is understood as a quest to find a way out of “overstructured society” and to “lead people towards closeness and the understanding of life and others’ happiness as being above individual performance and success. It is thus a kind of counter-movement in present society” (Straka 2006, p. 8).

Critical pedagogy reflects the topic of the school as a centre of community praxis. The core of its social philosophy lies in the concept of empowerment, specifically in empowering various groups and communities. A key figure in this school of thought is P. Freire, A. Giroux, P. MacLaren. In the emancipatory (anti-oppressive) framework of social pedagogy, empowerment is understood to be a social act taking place in the critical contact of the subjects of education with the social reality; that is, the practice of freedom. The school is viewed as a significant actor in local processes, and the community takes on the role of the bearer of social change enacted in the processes of dialogical and critical community education and learning (Freire, 1972, 2005, 2006; Giroux, Freire & MacLaren, 1988; Ledwith, 2005; Tett, 2006).

Specialists in social work focus on the educative potential of community projects, the analysis of spontaneous learning processes in the local community, and the potential of community education in the development of said communities (Hartl, 1998; Tett, 2006; Hager & Halliday, 2006; McGivney, 2011). In social pedagogy, which has the closest ties to community school issues given the nature of the discipline and the subjects of its

research, processes of informal learning “outside the walls” of traditional educational institutions have long been studied by researchers (Klíma 2004). This research points out that a more in-depth analysis is needed of the social function of professionals in formal education as well as the educational function of social actors who are outside the sphere of formal education (Longás, Civiš et al., 2008).

Both social work and social pedagogy are attentive to making use of the potential of Communities of Practice in lifelong learning processes (Allee, 2000; Elboj Saso & Oliver Pérez, 2003). Communities of Practice are mainly understood as a context that broadens one’s opportunities to learn and reduces tensions between different social groups. According to Wenger, communities of practice include people who share an interest in and passion for the same thing, which they aspire to develop during regular interaction. Community praxis thus unifies the community (learning as belonging), and incorporates meaning (learning as experience) with practice (learning by doing) (Wenger 1998).

Among the possible scenarios for re-scholarization outlined by OECD (2001), the concept of community schools is mentioned alongside the learning school model (the school as a learning organization)¹. The concept of the school as an organization with a focus on learning is addressed in the discourse analysing the possibilities of development in so-called knowledge society. These models are predicted to be influential on the future development of the school (OECD 2001). The differences between the two concepts can be outlined as follows: the community school functions as a centre of social and cultural life. Its model presupposes a strong social consensus regarding education in schools as a tool for countering social fragmentation and the loss of social values (Černý, Greger, Walterová & Chvál, 2010). Meanwhile, the learning school emphasises high quality and innovation achieved by personalising the education process, tailoring it to individual pupils while preserving a great degree of central management on the part of the state (ibid., 2010). The difference between both concepts is evident particularly in their respective attitudes to accessing education (equality of conditions versus equality of results).

¹ The possible scenarios are described as a) deschoolization – the weakening of the social role of schools and deprecation of formal educational institutions, b) the maintenance of the present state with the risk of stagnation, and c) reschoolization as a result of the rise of community schools as learning organizations (OECD 2001; Kotásek 2002).

Although the concepts of the community school and the learning school differ in many key aspects, they both embrace lifelong learning, personalized curricula, and making use of the educative potential of the learning community. However, while the community school is chiefly defined by its openness to the educational and social needs of its locale and its encouragement of learning on the local level, the school as learning organization is significantly inspired by elements of corporate culture and has been criticized as simply a tool of the needs of the knowledge economy in the liberal market. There has also been critical reflection of the fact that learning organisations emphasise elements of strategic behaviour and the effective use of information, without factoring in moral, social, spiritual and other aspects (Martínez-Otero Pérez, 2006). On the other hand, the community school is a dynamic collective integrated into the local community (of learning) and vice versa, enabling both communities to develop educational projects that facilitate the social and cultural transformation of the school as well as its surroundings. Learning and education are not an end in and of themselves, but also a means to achieving personal development and increasing the quality of life of the community as it develops. The community school as a learning community has the following attributes: public participation (in decision-making, instruction, classroom volunteering), focus on learning (every pupil should be able to achieve their maximum), positive expectation (emphasising the potential of learners and not their deficits), and permanent development (the ongoing reflection upon and evaluation of the process) (Merino Fernández, 2008).

The Community School Concept

In the relevant literature (e.g. Cichoňová, 2004; Lauermann, 2002, 2008, 2011, 2013; Lorenzová 2001a,b; Neumajer, 2002; Vik, 2004, 2007), the community school concept is assessed from various perspectives, including the intellectual-spiritual outlook, the social activist outlook, and the preventative as well as material potential of the school to contribute to community development. The interconnected character of school education, special educational needs, and social services with their human and material resources is emphasised (Rodríguez Izquierdo, 2007). US-based Coalition for Community School (CFCS),² which represents community schools and

² According to the CFCS, there are more than 5000 community schools in the US, with many cities using the community school model as a tool of educational reform. Chicago, Illinois is currently home to over 150 community schools; Portland, Oregon has 55 schools

related initiatives all over the United States, defines the community school as follows:

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities (CFCS: *What is a Community School?*).

The identification of the basic traits of community schools and their practical implementation has been subject to particular scrutiny. For example, Hager and Halliday (2006), as well as McGivney (2011) outline the following basic traits: focus on education; school, family and community engagement; extended hours and expanded learning opportunities; partnerships; and site coordination.

Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends. A key characteristic of the community school concept is its orientation towards development and the practical application of the curriculum, the principles of lifelong learning, and inclusive pedagogical praxis based on pedagogical approaches sensitive to the specific traits of each community. These aims correspond to the educational priorities of the EU, which endorse inclusion in schools, preventing underachievement at school, cooperation in the delivery of lifelong learning, and the development of communities of learning.

It is a commonly accepted notion that community schools introduce problem solutions that are closer to community members, provide services as a coordinated reaction to the varied needs of children and adults, and offer suitable opportunities for young people to advance their education by means of support services (Eccles, 1999; Dryfoos, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1998). Community schools' orientation is towards functional partnerships that bring both financial and human resources to the school and participate in extracurricular activities based on analysing community needs (Pappano, 2010). Extracurricular pursuits can lead to forming positive social interaction and connect schools to their communities (McLaughlin, 2000; Richardson et al., 2010). Community schools play a particularly important role in areas with high levels of social risk (e.g. unemployment, low socioeconomic

known as SUN Schools (School Uniting Neighborhoods); Lincoln, Nebraska, has 25 schools; and NYC over 100 schools (CAS – Children's Aid Society Community Schools).

status of families, heightened delinquency rates, public health issues, etc). Basch (2010) argues that community schools are capable of providing health, psychological and social counselling and other services to students from low-income communities with poor access to these resources. The best known projects aimed at bringing communities into schools' community praxis include (HCZ) Harlem Children's Zone in New York, EAZ (Education Action Zone) in the UK, and ZEP (Zones d'Education Prioritaires) in France (Hatcher & Leblond, 2001).

Community Schools in Research

According to the International Centre of Excellence for Community Schools (ICECS), empirical research into the educational praxis of community schools is currently being undertaken on a global scale. Field research conducted by J. Quinn of the Children's Aid Society (National Institute for Community Schools) in the UK focuses on, among other topics, the leisure activities and career development of youth in socially disadvantaged environments. Martinez and Hayes' (2013) research reports are also vital for the support and development of community schools, using case studies to confirm the social returns of investing into the community school model.

According to a study on inclusion by Mortier, Hunt, Van de Putte & Van Hove (2010), incorporating the knowledge of the local community and the skills and experience gained thanks to community praxis has a positive influence on individual pupils' inclusion. Research by the Coalition for Community Schools has shown that community schools in the US achieve high levels of inclusion, especially because they assist all children to experience success in the school environment. Improvements are felt not only in terms of knowledge, but also in more mindful ways of spending one's free time and in a greater involvement in community life, which raises the quality of life for families and the community as a whole. The report also cites a decreased percentage of pupils dropping out of school, greater cooperation with parents, resolving various problems with upbringing, and a positive impact on the development of the entire local community (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009).

Research has also shown that although the experience arising from the practice of community schools can be inspiring, local differences may often mean that experience is not fully transferable to a different geographical area with its own local conditions. This has been demonstrated, for instance, by British research into NYC's Harlem Children's Zones (HCZ). This concept has been transposed into the UK, resulting in initiatives to

increase social inclusion in schools whose community involvement gave them the character of “children’s zones”. According to Dyson et al. (2012), these projects were primarily aimed at disadvantaged families, which only included a disproportionately small number of the families and children in the area surrounding the given school. In *Developing Children’s Zones for England*, the authors concede that the concept of Harlem’s children’s zones could be implemented in the British context on the condition that it should include a wide range of problems of all the social groups that comprise the surrounding community (Dyson et al. 2012).

Community Schools in the US

In the US, community schools operate in partnership between the school and other community resources, aiming to ensure that pupils from all socioeconomic backgrounds have their individual educational needs met. There are multiple models of community schools and their variants, which combine different elements of the basic concepts and include some of the following:

Beacon schools are community schools in New York, which are open to children, youth and adults supported by the Youth Development Institute even outside regular teaching hours. These schools support the development and education of young people, the development of community services, and forging links between school and home life.

Children’s Aid Society Community Schools have been active in New York since 1992, specifically in socially excluded locales such as South Bronx, East Harlem, Staten Island, and Washington Heights. These schools combine the curriculum with providing educational and community services in the area of health and social care.

Communities in Schools (CIS) are operated in 25 American states by a federal-level organisation with 200 branches, all of which share the vision of establishing a support system for pupils in schools, connecting youth support work with adult cooperation, the development of communities by forming new community school partnerships, and spreading examples of good practice.

Schools of the 21st Century operate in Connecticut as a model of children’s and family services provided in schools, transforming them into a multi-service centre, and striving to eliminate the differences between children’s services in schools and elsewhere. This model has been made possible by the cooperation with the Comer’s School Development Program (SDP) and the Comer/ Zigler Initiative (CoZi).

United Way Bridges to Success is a model active in Indianapolis on the initiative of the United Way of Central Indiana in partnership with state schools. It advocates for broadening the scope of services available in schools under supervision by local branches of the organisation. These are business, church or socially-oriented subjects that can bring in vital resources to assist children and families in various life situations. The project also aims to boost the academic success of pupils, family independence, and community development.

University-Assisted Community Schools are based on the cooperation between the Netter Center for Community Partnerships and the University of Pennsylvania. It now also incorporates the Boston College, the University of Central Florida, the University of Oklahoma at Tulsa and the University of New Mexico. These community schools serve all members of the community and simultaneously offer opportunities for pedagogical research and the development of students in the field of civic participation (National Center for Community Schools, 2011, p. 11-12).

Community school development in the US has been largely shaped by the Children's Aid Society (CAS) based in New York and its NCCS branch (National Center for Community Schools)³. The association's activities are mainly concentrated on transforming public education and putting forward methodological recommendations for the practice of community schools with the input of university specialists. In 1997, CAS became one of the three founding partners of the Coalition for Community Schools (CFCS) headquartered in Washington, DC. The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of federal, state-level and local organizations in education including K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and social services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks. Community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. There are a number of national models and local community school initiatives that share a common set of principles: fostering strong partnerships, sharing accountability for results, setting high expectations, building on the community's strengths, and embracing diversity and innovative solutions (CFCS, online). To deliver these results, the coalition cooperates with a number of partners in strategic areas such as community development

³ Established in 1994 under the title National Technical Assistance Center for Community Schools.

and the support for families, educational institutions, the local community networks of schools, and governmental bodies. It is supported by a range of federal and international foundations, such as Atlantic Philanthropies, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the JP Morgan Chase Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which is also highly active in its support of community schools across the former Eastern bloc.

Community Schools in the UK

Community schools, known as *village colleges*, experienced a boom in the 1960s in the UK with one of their major proponents being Henry Morris. This period was characterized by the politics of positive discrimination in favour of socially disadvantaged students (Rýdl 1997), in which schools played the role of supporting the reconstruction of society. In select primary schools in neglected urban areas (especially in Liverpool and Manchester), schools were granted financial incentives and job posts as part of a pilot project with the goal of raising the success rates of socially disadvantaged students and to build up cooperation with parents as well (by setting up counselling centres, requalification courses for unemployed youth, etc). Their function of social compensation constituted a key characteristic of these schools. Later on in the 1970s, integrated comprehensive schools became a major site of development, adding a community and infrastructural function to the compensatory one. Schools came to be newly used as a place to hold local community events and began to offer tailored educational activities potentially available to all children and adults in the community (e.g. various options for the qualifications achieved) and to create integrated workplaces with other socially, culturally and educationally oriented institutions for further education or leisure time (Rýdl 1997).

The contemporary situation in the UK, particularly in England and Wales, is split into two lines of community school development. One refers to community schools as such; that is, state schools (maintained schools) administered by local educational authorities (LEA) and subject to the national curriculum. Local authorities employ the staff of these schools, own the school buildings, and set out the conditions of admission for prospective pupils. The International Centre for Excellence of Community Schools (ICECS), established in Coventry, is heavily involved in the activities of these schools, and its CEO Chris Jones has recently appeared in seminars and workshops in the Czech Republic to promote and support community schools there as well.

The second line of development picks up after the initiatives of the 1960s and 70s, when community schools' primary focus lay in the issues of compensating for social disadvantage and improving the academic achievements of pupils/students in areas at risk of social exclusion. According to Chapman (2011, p. 88-90) the education system in the UK, particularly in England, saw major changes after the 2010 election. The government has supported a diversified spectrum of education providers from both the public and private sectors, but there is still acknowledgement of equal opportunities and social mobility. School management has taken into account emerging trends, such as leadership models that integrate strategic partners from outside the school. New types of schools have also been introduced, including academies, free schools and all-through schools,⁴ which function independently of local authorities and report directly to the Ministry of Education. Wide-ranging organizational structures have been established that enable schools to be joined in federations⁵ or chains⁶ through one coordinating sponsor.

As multiple-source financing of schools grows in prominence, schools are financed both by sponsors and by dedicated trusts that accept the responsibility of working together towards the school's success and assist in its strategic development, giving rise to the term school-trust. The integration of a private sponsor is thought to raise the budget of schools as well as introduce a different type of organizational culture informed by practical experiences in the private sector and management; in other words, the community school is combined with the entrepreneurial culture of the school as a learning organization.

The aforementioned developments in the attitude to schools, which emphasize diversification and building connections with the business sphere in an appeal to corporate social responsibility, are well illustrated on the example of academies. There are currently three major forms:

Sponsored academies: initially underperforming state schools (maintained schools) that have been assigned a sponsor in line with the government's intervention strategy, in order to provide financial support as well as take part in the schools' management. Private sponsors include companies

⁴ All-through schools offer education from primary or even kindergarten level "all through" to secondary school education, i.e. up to ages 16-19.

⁵ Groupings of schools that operate as a single administrative unit, often with one director.

⁶ Free schools often form chains as state-financed independent schools.

and educational charities, which may also work in cooperation with universities and further education colleges.

Converters' academies: formerly state-maintained school with very good results that have requested independence of local authority control in order to gain legal autonomy. As these schools have freely opted for academy status, they are not required to be assigned a sponsor.

Free schools: new academies established since 2011 via the Free School Programme. They are financed by the state, but can be founded by a wide range of entities, including groups of educators, parents, charity organizations, universities, firms etc.⁷ These types of schools are independent of local authorities and operate by permission of the Ministry of Education under a governmental funding agreement (New Schools Network, 2015).

New organizational structures in the form of sponsored academies have taken hold as a result of the liberalization and decentralization of school policy, often in potentially problematic city locations with an accumulation of social and economic risks (housing, crime, public health) and aim to improve the standards of underperforming schools. How the research of the University of Manchester demonstrates (see Chapman 2011, p. 91-95), the development of sponsored academies depends not only on incentives from the state or strategic sponsors, but especially on the local context and the presence of key local catalysts of change, such as dissatisfaction with the conditions at a given school, a shared hope of improvement, a specific vision formulated by local leaders that reaches beyond the boundaries of the school and its immediate community, and the general activities of the local non-profit sector that can also positively influence schools. This model can be classified as representative of community schools in the British context.

Community Schools in the Czech Republic: History and the Present

The Czech Republic has been characterised by an interest in community development and community work (including informal community education and learning) since the 1990s, particularly in the newly established field of social work (e.g. Hartl, 1998; Havrdová, 1997). In social pedagogy, theoretical reflection of community education, the introduction of community education into schools, and the education of community workers only came into prominence with the new millennium (Lorenzová 2001a, 2001b; Neumajer,

⁷ According to Chapman (2011, p. 89), free schools can be likened to public schools in the US but with a greater degree of independence, to charter schools, or to the Swedish model of free schools.

2002; Lauermann 2002, 2011; Lauermann et. al. 2008; Šedová, Rabušicová, 2003; Cichoňová, 2004; Vik 2004, 2007). The establishment and development of community schools in the Czech Republic is associated with similar initiatives throughout the post-Communist bloc: in 1992, the Community school Development Project was launched in Hungary by the Open Society Institute (OSI) New York and Open Society Foundation (OSF) Hungary. In 1997, the programme expanded into the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Albania, and former Yugoslavia. The same year also saw the establishment of the Centre for Community Cooperation in Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation, with support of the C. S. Mott Foundation and the US-based NGO Educated Choices Heighten Opportunities (ECHO). The specific community school model developed here is still used in Russia, particularly the Siberian region.

The attitude to community schools in the country is distinguished from the other surveyed regions (the US, the UK, Spain, Latin America) in that the general public and partly the academic community still regards them as an alternative school type. Similarly to other post-communist countries, the development of community schools was initially tied to NGOs in the Czech Republic, and their practical development preceded theoretical reflection. In cooperation with the Open Society Fund (1997–2000), the civic organisation *Poryv* undertook a project in support of community education coordination and the broadening of the community activities offered by three schools⁸ (Vik & Vrzáček, 2005).

The society *Nová škola* (The New School) was among the first proponents of community schooling in the Czech Republic. In 2000–2002, it cooperated with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and *Nadace rozvoje občanské společnosti* (The Foundation for the Development of Civic Society) on the project *Community School Support* (*Podpora komunitních škol*), the aim of which was to initiate the development of community schools in ethnically diverse locales. The schools included the *Křenová Primary School* in Brno (*ZŠ Křenová v Brně*), the *Přemysl Pittr Primary School* in Ostrava (*CZŠ Přemysla Pittra v Ostravě*), the *Havlíčkovo Square Primary School* in Prague (*ZŠ Havlíčkovo náměstí v Praze*), and the *Předlice Primary School* in Ústí nad Labem (*ZŠ v Předlicích v Ústí nad Labem*). Other initiatives of the organisation have included the *Summer Schools of Community Education* (2005, 2007) and the projects *The Transformation of Schools into Educational*

⁸ The *Angelova Primary School* in Modřany, Prague 4 (*ZŠ Angelova v Praze 4 Modřanech*), the *5th Primary School* in Most-Rudolice (*5. ZŠ Most-Rudolice*), and the *1st Primary School* in Pilsen (*1. ZŠ Plzeň*).

Centres for the Local Community (Přeměna škol na vzdělávací centra místní komunity, 2006–2007) and The Support of Community Schools/Centres in the Czech Republic (Podpora komunitních škol/center v České republice, 2006–2009).

Schools themselves have also shown their initiative. In 2000, the League of Community Schools (Liga komunitních škol) was established to be the umbrella organisation for schools developing the model of inclusive community education, aiming to introduce this model into the Czech school system. The League is mostly comprised of schools that operate in socially excluded locales or nearby, including the Prague: Grafická Primary School (ZŠ Praha: Grafická, Havlíčkovo nám.), the Předlice Primary School in Ústí nad Labem (ZŠ v Předlicích v Ústí nad Labem), the Most: Chánov Primary School (ZŠ Most: Chánov) the Křenová Primary School in Brno (ZŠ Křenová v Brně, nám. 28. října). The schools themselves are aware of being given segregationist labels and ostracised for allegedly causing the educational problems of Roma pupils, as well as lacking any systemic advantages or a clear formulation of their role in the educational system.

Rural community schools take a somewhat different path in their initiatives. In 2005, the National Network of Rural Community Schools (Národní síť venkovských komunitních škol) was established, which now has partners in over ten countries in Europe and beyond. The organisation works to support rural community development with particular emphasis on the lifelong learning of rural populations in community schools. The schools include, among others, the Bory Community School (Komunitní škola Bory) the Rosice Community School (KŠ Rosice), the Tasov Community School (KŠ Tasov), the Hoříněves Community School (KŠ Hoříněves), and the Starý Jičín Community School (KŠ Starý Jičín). These schools are predominantly active in Moravia and their standards include the provision of lifelong learning to all adult inhabitants of their municipalities (so not only parents) and participation in development activities and in community life (Brána pro venkov, 2009, online).

In the Czech context, there are also efforts to establish a systemic link between community schools and social services, exemplified by the policy document of the Olomouc region titled the *Mid-Term Plan for the Development of Social Services in the Olomouc Region, 2011–2014 (Střednědobý plán rozvoje sociálních služeb v Olomouckém kraji pro roky 2011 – 2014)*, more specifically its framework titled The Connection of Community Schools with Social Services (Propojení komunitních škol se sociálními službami). A number of schools undertake independent community initiatives, such

as the Pilsen Community School (Plzeň: 1. ZŠ), which has been striving to become the educational and cultural centre of the Bolevec residential area in accordance with community education principles since the 1990s. Many schools have also been applying for funding in order to finance their transformation into community centres with the Education for Competitiveness operational programme. According to Lauer mann (2013), research carried out for the C. S. Mott Foundation has identified around 100 primary and 20 secondary schools meeting the criteria for being classified as community schools. Still others have some community school characteristics.

We have outlined that the beginning of the development of community schools in the Czech Republic was linked to NGOs. The perspectives of NGO representatives, community schools, and the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports (MŠMT) have aligned more closely since 2007, owing to a panel discussion between NGO and Ministry representatives. This was followed by the Ministry commissioning a report that would be known as the *Analysis of the Readiness of the Czech Environment and the Development Possibilities of Community Schools (Analýza připravenosti prostředí v ČR a možností rozvoje komunitních škol, 2008)*. The team headed by M. Lauer mann, a recognised expert on international cooperation among community schools as well as on community schools in the Czech Republic, conducted case studies at 40 schools. In the entire sample of schools that self-identified as community schools or participated in projects to support the community dimension of schooling, only one institution was building its community schooling concept in direct cooperation with the educational programme. Eight high schools and one primary school in the sample developed the community school concept in relation to lifelong learning as a complementary activity for adults that was not reflected by the school's overall curriculum⁹ (Lauer mann et al., 2008; Lauer mann, 2010).

Generally speaking, the activities of community schools are influenced by the specifics of their locales, and thus no two community schools can be exactly the same. While collating the information on community schools in the Czech Republic, the following models were identified as being the most frequent:

- community schools emphasising lifelong learning for adult community members;

⁹ High schools participating in the project *Supporting the Development of Community Schools (Podpora rozvoje komunitních škol)* carried out by the Moravian-Silesian Region in 2006–2008.

- schools operating in socially excluded localities or in their vicinity,
- striving to facilitate inclusion;
- community schools acting as centres of social and cultural life in their towns;
- community schools founded by churches and societies;
- community schools founded on parental initiative (e.g. “forest schools”);
- community schools focusing on reform pedagogy (e.g. Waldorf and Montessori schools), etc.

A typical characteristic of community schools as organizations with social engagements is their syndication on national and international levels under the banner of NGOs so as to be able to coordinate key activities. In the 1980s, the International Community Education Association was established in the UK, branching into seven regional offices for Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South and Central America, and the Caribbean and Pacific regions. This is only one of the number of organizations currently active with the goals of supporting, developing and researching community schools.

One of the most important aims of community school development is to create a frame of reference for the schools’ quality. In 2004–2009, an international team of NGO representatives¹⁰ was appointed to articulate the standards for community schools, which were then tested at 80 schools in eight countries¹¹ as part of a two-year project titled *Confirming the Standards of Quality for Community Schools: An International Action Research Project* (*Ověření standardů kvality komunitní školy – projekt mezinárodního akčního*

¹⁰ Nová škola, o. p. s. (Czech Republic), Step by Step Foundation (Ukraine), Step by Step (Moldova), ContinYou (UK), The Krasnoyarsk Centre for Community Partnership (Russia) and GlobeEd Services (Canada).

¹¹ The Czech Republic was represented by the following ten schools: the Practical Primary School in Králíky (Základní škola praktická Králíky), the Primary and Nursery School in Brno, South Moravia Square 2 (Základní a mateřská škola Brno, Jihomoravské náměstí 2), the T. G Masaryk Primary School in Blansko (Základní škola T. G. Masaryka v Blansku), the Primary and Nursery School in Višňové (Základní a mateřská škola Višňové), the Primary and Nursery School in Lyčkovo Square, Prague (Základní a mateřská škola Lyčkovo nám., Praha), the Hanspaulka Primary School, Prague (Základní škola Hanspaulka, Praha), the Social Perspective High School and Higher Professional School in Dubí (Střední škola sociální Perspektiva a Vyšší odborná škola s.r., Dubí), the Waldorf Primary and Nursery School in Brno (Waldorfská a mateřská základní škola Brno), the Primary and Nursery School in Oleksovice (Základní a mateřská škola Oleksovice), and the Primary and Nursery School in Bohdík (Základní a mateřská škola Bohdík).

výzkumu). The results were presented at the international conference *The Development of Community School Quality: Our Measure of Success (Rozvoj kvality komunitních škol: Jak si vedeme)*, held in Kyiv under the auspices of the Step by Step Foundation on 14th – 15th June 2011, sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the East – East: Partnership without Borders programme of the Renaissance Foundation (Lauer mann, 2011).

The common standards of the international community school movement include:

- leadership: leadership supporting the development of school staff;
- partnership: developing cooperation with local organisations and community members;
- services: the school as a service provider in the counselling, social and health area;
- volunteering: encouraging pupils to participate in community life;
- lifelong learning: supporting the education of adult members of the community;
- parent engagement: dialogue between the school and the family, parents play an active role in students' learning;
- the school culture: orientation towards openness, creativity, initiative, cooperation and support;
- community development: the school as an actor in community development;
- social inclusion: creating opportunities for all those interested in education and personal development – regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, social or economic status, family income, dis/ability, or sexual orientation (see International Standards for Community School, online).

The last point – social inclusion – is especially relevant in the Czech Republic today. The OECD report *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* critically evaluates the Czech school system in light of the fact that it reproduces the existing stratification of society and does not take significant steps to include socially disadvantaged groups of children, pupils and students into the educational mainstream so as to create the conditions needed for their success in the job market and upward mobility (OECD, 2012). As reported by the Czech government (2006,

2012), the number of socially excluded areas in the country is on the rise¹², exacerbating tensions between different social groups and escalating social conflict. A troubling consequence of social exclusion is the phenomenon of internalized or learned helplessness, when the excluded communities and individuals cease to see themselves as active participants in society and do not engage in the processes of community learning or take advantage of the potential of community practice to improve living conditions. Inspiration for the development of inclusive practice in education in the Czech Republic can be found in community schools, particularly those that participated in the aforementioned projects in the 1990s.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to introduce the community school concept as one of the predicted future directions of schools in knowledge society. The current state of community school development in the Czech Republic has been illustrated in different parts of the text against the background of the movement's history in the US and the UK. Based on the above analysis of the community school concept, the description of its applications in the US and the UK, and the summary of its present state in the Czech Republic, it can be stated that the concept of the community school as practiced in different parts of the world and documented by different authors is not entirely homogeneous.¹³ Regardless, there are some common points applicable to the community school concept as a whole:

It acts as an educational, advisory and cultural centre of the locale;

- in its offer of educational activities, it reflects the specifics of its locality (in this case, the specifics of a socially excluded locality);
- it connects the educational reality of the classroom with the experience of pupils and community resources;
- it helps to overcome the absence of systematic solutions in the field of education of socially disadvantaged children, youth and adults by intensified initiatives (e.g. volunteering, trust fund financing etc.);

¹² In 2006, the number of socially excluded locales was given at 330 in 167 municipalities; in 2012 there were over 400. Today the number is as many as 606 areas throughout the Czech Republic, mostly in regions with high rates of unemployment resulting from the fall of the heavy industry. These locales are home to an estimated number of 95 000 – 115 000 inhabitants (Čada et. al. 2015).

¹³ For example Dyson & Kerr, 2013; Lauer mann, 2011; Lorenzová, 2001; Lorenzová & Pávková, 2013; Lubell 2011; Martinez & Hayes, 2013.

- it understands diversity and inclusion as crucial dimensions of its vision and praxis;
- it is open to all participants in community education (regardless of their age, gender, ethnic origin or religion) who are aiming to learn mutually and create a school based on friendly dialogue together;
- it participates in social and citizenship services and supports the development of community infrastructure;
- it is oriented towards the principles of lifelong learning and intergenerational cooperation.

It can also be said that learning and education in the community school are not ends in and of themselves, but more of a means to further community development and improve the quality of life on a local level; in effect, the community school represents not so much a curriculum as it does a development strategy (for the school and the local area as a whole). It follows that the transformation of schools into community ones in the US and the UK has been tied to educational reforms that aim to help resolve the situation in zones threatened by specific risks, which includes raising the academic results of local pupils/students in order to heighten their future chances in the socioeconomic sphere.

In the Czech Republic, community schools have not yet achieved system support on the part of decision-makers, leading to their reliance on cooperation with non-profit organizations (both Czech and international) as well as exchanging information and experiences with each other. Current initiatives are not consistently coordinated on higher levels and especially schools located in areas threatened by social exclusion (largely members of the League of Community Schools) are increasingly being forced to develop new models of their community engagement.

Finally, if the community school is to be one of the major models upon which to base schools of the future as discussed by OECD, substantial change is required in the present concept of the school as an institution. Its social function can no longer be reduced to a mere set of directions with the one-time goal of integrating a child or adolescent into society, but should be seen as an institution whose impact on the local community, along with the appropriate sensitivity to local needs and resources, enables social and cultural transformation of the school and its local community in the processes of mutual interaction. This introduces the vital question of how such processes should be initiated, developed and steered if there are multiple local partners with equal rights involved. What risk scenarios there are

regarding the future of community schools, they mainly revolve around the current competitive framework of education, the amount of responsibility for finances and budgeting placed on the schools themselves, and the more general concerns around the dissolution of local social ties and the growing particularization of interests of individual members of society.

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The Community School As a Contemporary Concept in Education and Its Evolution in the Czech Republic

The article aims to introduce the community school as one of the possible models for the predicted development of schooling in today's knowledge society. Contrasting with its applications in the UK and US, the paper showcases current developments in the community school concept in the Czech Republic, reflecting on the position of the community school in contemporary specialist discourse. There is an overview of select research into community schools, the types of community schools in the UK, US and the Czech Republic (where the concept has only been applied since the 1990s in its present form), complemented by an analysis of the community school concept as a whole with particular attention paid to its internal coherence and diversity. Community school standards are outlined to provide additional background. The methodology of the article is grounded in the theoretical analysis of specialist literature, relevant projects, and other sources.

