

1. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, SELECTION OF SUBJECT

A new outlook appeared in pedagogy: approaching the childhood from a sociological point of view. Instead of the application of formulas of development psychology, emphasis is now placed on variation processes of society and the sociological environment is now considered the decisive factor of the childhood. Personality development is governed by sociological reality for a variety of reasons: sociological demands define the goals of education and provide a medium for the children to fit into after the socialisation. On the other hand, all qualities of children, all opinions, all education theories and methods shall be defined and applied with regards to the actual era. Consequently, the constantly changing sociological reality is not just the goal, but also the base of education.

We might gain a clearer view of the questions of our present-day education by studying the society and *weltanschauung* of our era. However, analysing our own era has its advantages and disadvantages or threats, which shall be taken into account at the final analysis. Still, continuous reaction to the present is indispensable, as despite the many contradictions, contradictory interpretations and extreme opinions on reality, current problems shall be met with up-to-date solutions and rapid changes need rapid answers and solutions.

Definition of and opinions on the family is contradictory as well. The way youths view the family might provide a glimpse of the nature of the families of the future, and also of the educational tasks pedagogy shall undertake in case this view of families or the future needs adjustment. Also, the family is considered a main element in the *weltanschauung* of children as it reflects many values, norms, beliefs and opinions.

All forms of education and discipline shall start with gaining a clear picture of the current situation. Discovering the sociological reality and probing the students' current knowledge – or in this case,

attitude – might help us to define the educational goals of the future and the emphasis on the aspects of education and discipline.

2. GOALS

This paper combines pedagogical and sociological aspects to serve a dual purpose: to gather and summarize chief sociological factors that characterise the so-called post-modern society of our present era and thereby define the socialization of youths. Understanding this complicated view of society is achieved through topics of philosophy, our view of humanity and our weltanschauung reflecting in various aspects of everyday life. Thus we gain a picture of our present era that, though far from perfect, indicates the processes and emphasises of integration into society. Thereby the current peculiarities of the socialisation of youths is observed in a sociological background and interpreted accordingly.

This educational medium affects youths' everyday life, their weltanschauung and their thoughts. We place particular emphasis on discovering these childish outlooks on life and use them as starting points of educational processes. As children are able to provide valuable information on their way of life, thoughts and outlook on life, they might play an active part in the research and their interpretations help us to get to know the children entrusted to our care, which serves as a starting point of education and discipline. In this paper, we focus on one specific part of youths' weltanschauung: their thoughts on the family and on the future, and we interpret them with regards to the society of our present era. We had the opportunity to duplicate this research in German environment that enabled us to recognise the cultural and sociological idiosyncrasies confronted with another culture.

The goal of this paper might be summed up as:

- How does the philosophy, the sociological reality and the view of humans of our present era affect the socialisation of youths?
- As a result of the socialisation of our era, how do youths think about their future, especially regarding the family?

3. PROCESSING METHODS

In the first part of our paper, we focus on the analysis of the professional literature and based on that, a sociological description from a pedagogical point of view. Researching the phenomena of society and family concerns various subjects of science, chiefly sociology, pedagogy and psychology. Various approaches, as they are grounded in various sciences, tend to differ, but we state that they must share a common ground as well. In our study, we attempt to combine the sociological and the pedagogical point of view to gain a useful tool for tackling our problem.

We utilised Hungarian and German professional literature to get a picture of present-day society and the conditions of socialisation. This literature contains studies, theoretical papers and research reports on philosophy, sociology, anthropology and pedagogy. We focused on professional literature published in recent years in Hungarian and German. Whenever possible, we used books and studies published after 1990, as we placed particular emphasis on actuality as to ensure that our results might be applied to the present.

We avoided describing the “post-modern phenomenon” classically, from a philosophical point of view, instead we attempted to grasp the way the philosophy, the spirit of our present age is reflected in our way of life and our socialisation. This way, we studied the reflections of the “post-modern” in sociology and pedagogy.

The other part of our paper deals with empirical research focusing on the impact of socialisation phenomena described by professional

literature on the life of youths, the way they think about their own situation, their plans of life, especially their family and future family.

4. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Our research and study is grounded in the new sociological outlook on childhood that attempts to remove the child from the comparison to adulthood and studies the child and its life as a sociological exercise.

New aspects of the research and interpretation of childhood are seen in the starkest contrast when compared to the earlier point of view. The earlier picture of the child was independent of the current sociological structures – universal, we might say –, thereby not only neglecting the cultural and sociological environment of the child, but also studying the entirety of childhood from a grown-up's point of view. This interpretation of childhood invariably focused on qualities of children it deemed universal, and looked on the next generation as the embodiment of incompetence, immaturity and irrationality, considering the age before adulthood a state of lacking that precedes and constitutes a learning period for later, autonomic periods of life. Critics of this approach mentioned the neglecting of – for example, sociological – differences, the rigid definition of time periods and the presumed passivity of the child.

The new approach, called sociological, finds this interpretation of childhood that deals with the scientific description of classic concepts of socialisation and development inadequate, and attempts to erase the comparison between child and adult, offering ways of research as a sociological exercise.

German professional literature mentions a change regarding the childhood. Some kind of sociological definition and the imprint of a historical age remains in any child grown up in any historical era, but pedagogical literature all but neglected this in the 80-ies and 90-ies. In the last decade, however, we discover the sociological outlook in science and professional research. In the 80-ies, a new expression,

„veränderte Kindheit“ appeared in professional literature, based on the technical, informatical and sociological changes of the past two decades and describing a radically different childhood to the previous generation's.

Our line of thought and choice of research methods to study and illustrate our subject were based on this research paradigm.

5. STUDIED ELEMENTS OF THE “POST-MODERN” SOCIALISATION

Studying Hungarian and German professional literature we gathered the philosophical and sociological results that influence the child of our era and define its socialisation. Then we selected the chief elements of socialisation and focusing on current tendencies, searched for connections between sociological reality and education while keeping an eye on possible new methods and threats.

The following elements of socialisation were studied:

- Motivations of childbearing
- Evolution of family relationships (relationship to parents, siblings and grandparents)
- The effects of conscious education on children
- Unconscious elements of socialisation (relationships to other people, music, television, computer, consumption, advertisements)
- Integration into society, gender roles
- Properties of children's activities
- Space and time in children's life
- Role models in our era

We must note that phenomena described in German and Hungarian professional literature were, despite the differences in historical and cultural tradition, very similar. Tendencies described in Germany 10-

15 years ago appeared in Hungary just a few years ago, but owing to globalisation and the quick acquisition of Western standards the way of life of the youths in the two countries are very much alike. Problems might arise from the differences in tradition and historical experience, and also the different economical reality, as the standards communicated by the media might conflict with the economical possibilities and traditions in Hungary, which might lead to conflicts in youths' lives.

So, to our first question that attempted to define a connection between the philosophy, the sociological reality and the outlook on humans in our era and the socialisation of youths, we might answer that phenomena described in philosophy and recognised in society reflect in the life, actions and standards of children. These constitute new challenges for education, but neither school nor families are up to these tasks, and professional literature currently deals with the recognition of change and description of threats, not yet offering answers or new methods.

6. EXPERIENCES OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

In this paper we analyse 38 Hungarian and 21 German studies, focusing on sample size, method of data acquisition and the actual aspect of study concerning the view of future.

On the whole, we might say that – presumably in part due to financial reasons – Hungarian researches are performed on a small sample, motivated by personal reasons, while German researchers worked with a greater, more representative sample. The smaller sample provides a better opportunity for the researcher to perform additional qualitative analysis, yet German researchers working with the greater sample more often supplement their questionnaire-based study with qualitative interviews. In Hungary, studies of the view of future are usually directed at adolescents, while in Germany, young adults are included in the focus group.

In both countries, profession and family planning are the chief aspects of future planning. Many Hungarian researchers focus on youths' choice of general values, probably due to the change of values caused by the Hungarian regime change. Being a current problem, research is made into the health prospects of youths. Youths of roma origin and in disadvantageous situation are considered a special focus group in Hungarian researches, while German studies compare Western and Eastern Germans.

German and Hungarian researches prove that future prospects of youths are sensitive to changes in society in both countries. Global and current sociological problems affect fears, desires and optimism. Studies in both countries also proved that sociological and personal prospects are not related. Youths are more optimistic and hopeful about their personal prospects while having a negative view on the future of society.

German studies from 1985 on reflect a tendency and process that the future prospects of German youths is strongly influenced to this day by the differences between East and West, and also the reunion. West German values moved towards individualism by the end of 80-ies. Today, teenagers' (14-20 years) way of life might be described as consumption-oriented and hedonistic, but later it is replaced by traditional values and the classic, family-oriented model. People of the East were "liberated" from traditional values in 1992 and youths plunged suddenly into individualism, which was handicapped by financial hardships and the slower change of society, leading to the failure of both their prospects and their old and new values, leaving them searching hopelessly for new guidelines.

The number of studies into future prospects increased significantly in Hungary after the second half of the 90-ies and especially after 2000. Some researchers analyse representative studies to identify tendencies, focusing on the 18 years since the regime change. Results show that Hungary became more open, there are more possibilities and this reflects on the goals and future plans of youths as well. Youths' values were altered in the past decades, individualism became more stressed, yet akin to German results, traditional plans

of life and values aren't eradicated but merely moved to a later stage in life. Apparent prespectiveless and hedonism of 14-19 year olds, strengthened by the media and consumer culture, aren't a permanent way of life. Perhaps the disillusionment of these concepts help the return to traditional values.

To summarize the studies we might say there are many similarities between the future plans and values of Hungarian and German youths. This similarity became more pronounced in recent years as the end of the communist regime started value uniformisation on a sociological and global scale in Europe. This process led to greater changes in Hungary and also in the case of East German youths, who, like Hungarians, took on Western values. The effect on them was greater than on other age groups because of their natural way-seeking. Today we witness how people attempt to integrate these new goals and values into their own sociological frame, as the changes that took decades in West Germany are implemented in the Eastern Bloc in a few years without any prelude. The search for new ways and guidelines is still underway today. German and Hungarian youths both feel the disadvantages of their individualistic lifestyle and return to their old values.

7. GOAL AND ELEMENTS OF EMPIRICAL STUDY, CONSIDERATIONS OF RESEARCH METHODS

Our goal, as mentioned in the prelude, is to gain information on youths' weltanschauung and thoughts from themselves in order to get to know them better, to find explanations for the differences between German and Hungarian youths and find possible tendencies that are included in youths' future plans, but shall be influenced during their education.

After considering our options and goals, we chose a qualitative research strategy, which, although still being disputed, is becoming more and more popular.

Qualitative research is derived from the interpreting epistemological concept that disputes the concept that – being prominent for hundreds of years – scientific cognition equals the research of logical connections and phenomena and thus reality is synonymous with our knowledge of it.

Our goal was to uncover youths' personal prospects and values and interpret them in accordance with other aspects of their lives, from which we might learn lessons and which coincides with our researching interests. We attempted to question the participating Hungarian and German youths with various methods and also talk to them freely whenever possible and observe the groups in class. Spending as much time with them as possible was especially important with German students, as their thoughts and their actions in a given situation might only be interpreted this way.

In our research we applied a mixture of methods, thereby gaining a more complex picture about the prospects and family view of the youths contained in our sample.

We found **metaphor analysis** very interesting and especially suitable to quickly gain a picture of the interpretation of a concept, in this case, family. This method is suitable to bring concept interpretations that are hard to express verbally to the surface using picturesque thinking processes.

We used metaphor analysis to construct a primary picture, only vaguely defining the objective. Students had to find a metaphor to the concept of family, their task being to complete a sentence: "Family is like..." Naturally, interpretations were in great part made up of information about students' own family, owing to personal experience and the subjective nature of the concept.

To summarize our goal with this method, we wanted to gain information on the family view of the students participating in the survey in special "picturesque form", to learn which qualities and functions of the family are the most important to them. Also, we looked forward to uncover the differences between the German and Hungarian students.

Our second method was **the qualitative content analysis of students' guided composition.** These longer exercises that allowed greater liberty in thought expression offered deeper and more precise insight into their thoughts on family. Both questioning and analysis was based on a different concept than in the case of the metaphors, thus allowing deeper and more accurate results.

This method utilised a more personal but indirect questioning method, which caused the very occurrences of the theme of family to contain extra information. Youths were tasked to write an essay titled "A day in 2025" which was context-analysed and searched for deeper coherence, with regards to formal elements. We also attempted to deduce youths' attitude and their intents, and finally we developed an aspect system that lead to a more transparent analysing process that is easier to follow and control.

To sum it up, our goal in this part of the research was to allow greater liberty for the expression of youths' opinions, to supplement the rigid metaphor analysis with the opportunity to express opinions freely. We looked for a connection between these concepts of family and the German and Hungarian sociological reality and attempted to express the values and goals contained in these concepts.

After the analysis of these methods we formed questions and looked for answers in order to supplement the study of our results. These questions were asked during interviews with Hungarian youths who expressed their conceptions about their future – beginning with the day of the interview until the day they will start their family or begin to work – answering open questions and also detailing the goals and values they intend to follow during their life. The conversations included the topics of own family, its values, personal relationships and the origins, reasons and motives of the youths' aspects of the future. The interviews were half-structured, as they followed a previously constructed line of questions that formulated the backbone of conversation but students' answers influenced the following questions. The analysis is qualitative as the students are known to us, our relationship in schools dates back for years.

Although not mentioned explicitly, but included in the aspects of the analysis is the information gained during lesson visits and conversations with students and their teachers.

Samples of various parts of the study are only partially shared as the interviews were performed at a later time and with Hungarian students. Utilising the opportunity for the comparison between Hungarian and German results, two Hungarian and two German groups were researched using the first two methods. Our choice of the German sample was influenced by a fellowship that allowed us to spend three months in a German town. Then, bearing comparability in mind, we looked for a Hungarian town that is similar to the German regarding youths' lifestyle and performed the study there in two schools.

Our choice of high school and polytechnic school was intentional, the goal being to have a chance to inspect if the students' aspects on future and family differ in these two types of school and if so, if the difference might be explained with the properties of schooling. We theorised that students in the polytechnic school begin working earlier in their life, thus they are expected to start a family earlier too, which in turn leads to family appearing more pronounced in their plans and also to different motives and emphasis in the relationship of career and family. Apart from the research of cultural and sociological differences, the study of this hypothesis was the main reason for the choice of our sample.

Data acquisition in Germany was performed in the spring of 2004. and in Hungary, the fall of 2004. Interviews were completed later, in the summer of 2006.

8. RESEARCH RESULTS, DEDUCTIONS

Data and results gained by various methods serves a dual purpose. First they add redundancy to the research, as information gained from independent sources either confirm each other or turn out to be contradictory, second, due to differences in methods and questioning,

results illuminate different aspects of our subject and thereby supplement each other.

Regarding the results of the study, we emphasise that the study was performed according to the aspects of qualitative research, our goal being to gain complex knowledge of youths' conceptions. Both data acquisition and result analysis was handled according to a holistic approach, every written and verbal information was recorded and analysed by us, therefore our own personal impressions, internal logic and aspects of form and content were included in the analysis.

The size of the sample allowed us to outline deeper context and to "keep subjects personal" but when stating results and deductions we cannot generalise. However we wish to mention our findings, the exposed context and theories that might be checked against a larger sample and might be applied to the whole population.

Summarising the results of the research, as **main result of our study** we surmise that regardless of nationality or gender, the conception of starting a family – marriage, children – is an integral part of youths' future plans. 74% of their number are expecting to do this. They consider family an important value, providing especially safety and the opportunity to "charge up". Their view of the future is optimistic. This result is supported by the results of all three of our methods, therefore we did not verify the sociological tendencies concerning of the fall of the concept of family.

Youths **life situation and age group characteristics** cause their plans to be more concerned with their more immediate future, maturity and technical exams and gaining a workplace, as these are more pressing elements of their future that are easier to plan. This is especially true to high school students as they plan on starting a family after collage, so in seven years at the earliest. Along with their choice of career, their short-term plans concentrate on starting their independent, individual life. Presumably this is more pronounced in the case of the Hungarian youths, as the German educational style places more emphasis on the child's freedom and independence. (We gained this information from the interviews, therefore we had no

chance to compare.) We note that during the data acquisition, youths in all student groups were surprised at being asked about their future. Youths appear not to formulate exact plans, they view their future as dubious and hard to foresee.

Their relation to future is usually full of hopes. German youths' papers on their planned days are carefree and enthusiastic, while Hungarians' view on their future are riddled with real sociological problems. Fears of material hardships and problems arising from their personal situation of life arise. We cannot term this situation as universal depression, but youths reckon with reality and this causes problems with planning, as desires and expectations are severely limited by reality.

Relation to future and prospects of life is influenced chiefly by the values of the students' age, beliefs, movies and books, idols, experiences in school, teachers, material status and life experiences and students' family. Analysing the influence of family background we found that a 17-18 year-old youth considers acceptance, safety and the balance of support and freedom are the most important factors of future planning. Youths also require conversations in the family, the admittance of conflicts and the presence of a trusted person with whom they can share their internal affairs. Interviews show that without basic safety and acceptance, youths' future prospects lose their foundations and the danger of emotional drifting arise.

Post-modern sociological reality influence prospects of the future but, as is obvious from our results, is not a deciding factor. Not the structure of the family itself but the life of an imaginary family and the roles within show new properties. Although youths generally have a positive opinion on family, 16% of their number doesn't view family as a wholly good concept, recognising conflicts, divorce, and emotional stress therein. Prospects of the future include the individualistic woman, career is now a value for girls too and the chosen profession is considered interesting instead of being a burden. Students emphasise the importance of material possessions, luxury, technical inventions, and youth, beauty, sport, and fitness are now

considered to be real values. Along with family relations, personal activities and hobbies appear. The influence of advertisements and media is felt in youths' prospects. Expectations about global future is pessimistic, reflecting the tendencies of popular scientific fiction.

Still, along with the new concept of roles and the media-influenced way of life, results from all three research methods show a **traditional family concept** retaining traditional values (like marriage, more than one children, the woman running the household and being the emotional centre of the family) and being most youths' objective, quite independent of the state of their current family. We surmise that children have a congenital desire, a need for a mate, for safety and a home, which, despite all the changes, family can still support on the long term better than anything else.

The concept of family, as described by youths, show the importance of solidarity and cooperation of the family, like joint dinner, conversations, quality time with children, playtime and free time.

This **duality** of the desire towards classic family life and the material, individualistic lifestyle come into conflict when youths do not make conscious decisions and do not plan in advance with foresight. The pressure from sociological expectations and the media is felt more strongly than internal desire. The yearning for education, several college degrees, travels abroad, gaining experience, maintaining one's youth, experiencing with freedom and independence all precede the starting of the family and one follows another, thereby the youth might start his professional career that might take up all his time for years and might also cause happiness and contentedness. However, all this might delay the starting of the family until the middle or even the end of the thirties, when giving up one's habits and adapting to another person is no longer easy. Childbearing might even have biological obstacles. Thus statistics show delayed age of marriage, decline of the number of marriages and the severe decline of the number of childbirth instead of youths' previously imagined, traditional family concept.

Regarding Hungary and Germany chief results were essentially identical. After comparison we found mainly similarities; discrepancies originated from different traditions and the differences of material status.

German youths (even in polytechnic school) see the elements of family life more consciously and accurately. Perhaps observing their own family, they learn the importance of parents' relationship even compared to their relationship with the children and how important conversations are, that woman and man share the responsibility to family life. German youths place a heavier emphasis on freedom. Own programs, friendships are important even in a relationship and children are raised to independence. Greater material safety offers the opportunity for all this and it also allows women to work part-time and the presence of a housekeeper.

We think that Hungarian youths experience a starker contrast between the witnessed examples and their desired way of life. They see no example of their new values and expectations being successfully integrated into their traditional way of life and how it might be possible within the limits of their modest material resources. Their view on family and expectations reflect a "joint struggle", a positive image that is more about co-operation and functionality than emotional safety. Hungarian youths have several insecurities and fears, the life of the family is filled with dealing with work, housekeeping, child raising and also the managing conflicts caused by their time aspects. Material possessions are considered important, abroad is attractive, still the described family everyday reflects the traditional sample.

Discrepancies between boys' and girls' conception of family surface most clearly in metaphors and papers. On the whole, boys' view on family is more positive but they fail to emphasise the emotional side, stressing the functional angle. To them, family is the traditional affair: wife, children, and joint time at evenings. However they cannot integrate this into their imaginary day, their thoughts being filled by global future, profession, workplace, exact tasks and

challenges concerning their work. Boys choose to be single more often.

Girls focus on the emotional side of the family and they cherish a romantic image of marriage that is sometimes intervened by the realistic picture gained in their own family. Also present is the image of the modern girl, owing to the influence of celebrities, music and media. Career and a work suitable for their abilities and interest are important to girls too, but family is considered even more important to a greater percentage. They attempt to integrate these two fields even when they recognise the conflict of time. On the whole, girls' view of the future is more realistic and focused on their personal future.

Between school types the main differences concern the style and length of their views on their future and family. Conforming to expectations and hypothesis, students of polytechnic schools plan on starting their family sooner and their concepts of the future is more realistic from the aspect of their career, but their profession isn't as important to them as it is to high school students. The most negative concepts on families are those of Hungarian polytechnic school students that might be caused by the lack of emotional safety and family examples.

High school students' presentation of their future and family is more detailed and colourful, their expectations detailed, career is more important and their link to their profession is more stressed.

During the analysis of our findings, we must take into account that our sample contains youths from outside Budapest, and in Germany we performed our research in a Bavarian city where traditional Christian values are more important than in other cities and territories.

To answer the question of our research, we might conclude that Hungarian and German youths think very similarly about their future, and family is an integral part of their outlook on the future. This outlook is influenced by witnessed examples, media and sociological demands, their possibilities are limited by their material

status, which they recognise accurately. We might surmise that changes in the families of our time do not appear in the future concepts on family or, at the very least, do not alter them significantly. As far as youths' plans and desires are concerned, the traditional way of life – based on marriage and raising children – remains unchallenged.

9. SUMMARY, EDUCATIONAL TASKS

Studying the properties of post-modern society and its view of humans we found that the chief factor of youths' future prospects is **the lack of role models for the individual life**. In German professional literature this way of life that lacks examples and forces every single youth to constantly seek new opportunities and to make decisions is termed, rather on the point, "tinkering life". Youths face a dual problem: the necessity to plan in advance and the inability to do so, which reflects in our findings. To have designs on their future is considered an external demand and would also give them internal security, but the lack of such leaves them with plans only for their immediate future and current tasks. They cannot fathom further situations and even if they do, these images are extremely malleable and do not appear as a goal, just one possibility of many. Parents' family model and their relationship in marriage appear as some kind of example, but in many cases, a strong desire is felt towards another way of life, another days of family life that lacks any examples or guidelines. Even though youths feel correctly that their world and future is sculpted by themselves and they partially cherish this opportunity and liberty, they get little hope in dealing with the situation.

The question of freedom and responsibility when facing several opportunities is a problem concerning the personal choice of the walk of life. These questions demand a wide range of knowledge from youths at the age of 18. Choice of school, career, consort and job are choices that influence their whole life and also their future choices, but still, nowadays these choices might be overruled. Thus

youths are not required by the age of 25-30 to find their final profession or live in a “till death do us part” relationship. Interviews and written answers show that despite all this, youths strive to find the career most fitting for them and they also feel the urge for long-term relationship and family. We theorise that these two aspects of life might provide an unchanging, reliable background that gives the safety that human nature desires so.

Personally planned and sculpted life, individual decisions and their responsibility are jointly described as **individualism**. This tendency is urged by the loss of guidelines that forces one to become the centre of one’s life and the origin of all values therein. Self-realization, success and the single individual’s responsibility arising from them forces youths into isolation and loneliness as they feel they are expected to care only for themselves, their own lives. Such extreme advance of individualism is not reflected in our research but research of values in past years clearly show this tendency. In our sample, the need for own hobby, personal pastime and female career in the imaginary family, the need for independence in the face of dependence reflect this. In this aspect, the problem arises not so much from relations in the family but from the lack of solidarity and help from the society.

In our society, **consumer lifestyle** and the **worship of money** influence youths and their aspect of the future the most. This effect is further stressed by the media. Consumption of goods and shopping itself appear in the imaginary future days, as youths consider their future physical environment very important, some even detailing a desired but unattainable life of luxury. Note that fashion and trends affect their profession of choice (economist, decorator, manager) as advertisements affect holiday destinations, brands of future cars, pastime and the strong desire to keep to their youths. Possession of technical and electronic gadgets is an integral part of their view on the future.

Professional literature describes the human of our days as **afraid** and full of **angst**. Research show that the namesake of the consumer society, consumption is backed by angst too. We eat and drink to get

rid of it. We buy to fill our lives with objects. We cannot find our place in the world as our lives are riddled with the hazy, the unpredictable and the vague. But angst might arise from loneliness, the lack of values and guidelines and the stress of decisions and responsibility or fear from civilization illnesses .

Although youths at the age of 17-18 do not face their life with angst and their future prospects are not riddled with it, still these plans are far from being carefree. These prospects might be termed realistic, as the sociological and material problems they expect to face are real, but they themselves recognise fear in their emotions about their future picture in the interviews, which cast something of a shadow on their optimism. We also have to stress that responsibility and the choice of lifestyle is hardly more than a plan in our research sample, as at this age, the environment at high school and in the family still keeps the youth in safety.

Of the changes in **socialisation** and its tendencies described by sociology, here we detail only those present in youths' aspect on family and future, either confirming or contradicting the professional literature.

Statistics about childbearing and demographic tendencies show that the population in Europe is in decline, thus elderly people will soon become the majority in our society. Causes of fewer births are the conscious lack of children as well as young women missing the age when they can have children.

Our empirical experience is that the conscious lack of children is all but absent in youths' prospect of their future; 75% are planning on marriage and children. Majority of this 75% are planning on more children and some on a big family, thus the decline of the population cannot be explained by the conscious planning of the youth, at least not at the age of 17-18. The answer is that their plans after high school and the sociological expectations (knowledge of foreign languages, several college degrees, work experience abroad) are so diverse and time-consuming that their desired starting of their own

family is moved so far into the future when childbearing is limited by biological obstacles.

Changes of **relationships in the family** on sociological level are not confirmed by our study either. Divorce and alternative family models are not spawned by conscious thought or design, as youths consider common-law relationship a step towards marriage and a trial of living together, not a permanent alternative. From this aspect we might surmise that the problem lays within youths' conception of family, their ability to handle conflicts and taking long-term responsibilities (as we mentioned earlier). All this might lead – contrary to expectations – to families' dispersion, the children remaining with one parent and with a possible second marriage, the creation of a reconstructed second family with even more problematic roles, functions and relationships.

Changes of **gender roles** in the imaginary families are linked to roles in families. According to professional literature, these roles are becoming more and more blurred and for decades the role of the woman has been transformed, which had a negative effect on the life of the family and the starting of new families. Analysis of papers and interviews show that the role of the male is based on the Parsons-model, perhaps placing a heavier emphasis on an active role in the family than before. Girls' plans include such a father and husband figure taking an even part in the raising of their children. The role of the female is more determined by gender, as boys picture their future wife in a more traditional role while girls expect to expand their future activities beyond being a wife and a mother to include profession, career, time for themselves and their mate and pastimes. This change in the female's role won't lead to conflicts of time and energy sharing as long as no more than plans are concerned, but their actual implementation requires the conscious balance of demands, expectations and reality.

Qualities of **activities** and their changes described in professional literature (growing loneliness, limited experiences, structured time, more important appearances) cannot be recognised in the life of the imaginary families. Their lives are not organised according to these,

at least not by conscious planning. However there are signs that point to computer games, an own television set, activities outside their homes and sport are unconscious but nevertheless integral part of both youths' present-day and imaginary future lives. These activities hint at a required time spent alone, organised free time and a daily routine dictated by the media. These activities are not the most important, however, as youths place a much heavier emphasis on joint meals, conversations and the couple's time together.

Professional literature, earlier research and our own study all lead to the same conclusion: that a distinction must be made between the imaginary future and feasible plans. There are basic differences between sociological reality, sociological tendencies and youths' plans for the future. Youths start their life and make their plans filled with the optimism and hopes characteristic to their age. Their designs on family (especially the structure and educational methods) are fundamentally based on their own family model but roles, interactions and activities in the family and the relation of family and career are influenced by the changes of post-modern society that have an almost undetectable but still profound effect on our days. Conflict of these two desires, expectations or plans is unavoidable. Youths try to avoid it by starting their family later, but they might be able to find better ways. Their first step should be to define their situation, expectations and desires more accurately.

An interesting but rather difficult question is what pedagogy and education are able to do in this situation and what shall be their prime tasks? To save values and traditions as best as possible? Or try to counter threats the children face? Or to keep up with times and accept whatever occurs in society, so in school and family as well?

Maybe we shall tackle the subject from further away and by a more indirect method. We think that our own samples are no longer valid, as the changes are now occur faster than a classic generation change. Although we fail to see the frame and time outside the family but the solution has to be constant conversation and communication. The youths themselves shall be asked! Perhaps we might hear surprising answers if we set aside our own values, expectations and conceptions

and just listened to them, observed their behaviour and reactions, or asked, but without any expectations regarding the answer: How it feel to be a youth in these days? What are you afraid of? What gives you pleasure? What do you desire? What pains you?

With the eternal optimism and faith of pedagogy we say that education is possible and is a force for good. We also think that it is impossible without attention, time, patience and relationship. It might seem to be a distant goal today, as changes bring uncertainty and questions the result of our work and efforts, cast the shadow of the doubt on all our methods and goals.

It's hard to summarize the changes that influence society, families and the future plans of youngsters. This new age brought a personality-oriented cult of freedom, a joy of life, pluralism, tolerance and a constant search for new experiences that constitute real values. The change, however, might also have a devastating effect on people and youths especially, by offering unattainable goals, filling their lives with empty illusions, destroying classic communities, cultures and traditions and failing to provide new guidelines.

An answer and an objective judgement are yet to come, but education must react to changes and phenomena constantly. Perhaps the best way is to listen to youths and try to understand them, attempting to maintain a constant relationship with them, meanwhile – possibly just “by the way”, indirectly – communicating universal human values and offer our own experiences as an alternative and a lesson.