

THE FAMILY AND FAMILY EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION – A CONTRIBUTION UPON THE BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF OTAKAR KÁDNER (1870–1936)

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This year, 145 years have elapsed since the birth of the educator who continues to live in current pedagogy through parts of his work *The Basics of General Pedagogy*. The pedagogue in question is and was Otakar Kádner.

Otakar Kádner was born on May 11, 1870 in Úhonice, and died on November 6, 1936 in Poděbrady. He served as a professor at the Charles University in Prague and as the head of the J.A. Comenius Institute of Pedagogy. He was also active as a teacher in the country. He co-founded the School of Higher Pedagogical Studies in Prague where he served as its head until his death (Chlup, Kubálek, Uher, 1938).

In his work named above, he does not explicitly pay attention to the relationship of the family, family education and social exclusion, but through his concept of professional writing which attempts to describe the area of pedagogy in historical and broader contexts, one can obtain substantial information on these topics.

The first excerpt of Kádner's work already strikes us as still up-to-date.

"Unfortunately, it needs to be admitted as a fact that, despite all the fine words about the influence of the parents and the family environment overall, the educational significance of the family has decreased greatly in recent times. The causes of this startling phenomenon are various, both general and personal, both external and internal, both economic and social, and they probably relate to the undoubted decomposition of family life itself." (Kádner, 1925, p. 314).

In reference to the above citation, it should not be mentioned today that the family is in crisis currently, but rather that it has been in crisis for almost a century. In some passages, Kádner pays attention to issues which are connected to the period of the creation of the quoted publication. Namely, these are the parents' workload, loss of multi-generational families, etc. Later, however, he almost touches upon the issue of socially excluded families.

"Further, it is known, that due to the rising housing and food expensiveness, the domestic relations of the worse circumstanced families are continually worsening, as the family is forced to limit its residential space: according to national economists' statistics, a single hectare of land before the Great War was home to in London 150, in New York 160, in Berlin 250, and in Paris even 370 people, while in Paris, 12,000 families of 6 members coexisted always in a mere single room. In such crowded flats, both health and morality necessarily suffer – children witness intimate family scenes from an early age – and whosoever can, remains outside all day long, coming home only to

sleep. The situation is even worse where in the cramped apartments, the whole family from little children to parents engage in gainful work or where the children from youth serve outside the house, delivering milk, bread, newspapers, etc., and then come to school sleepy and exhausted." (Kádner, 1925, p. 316–315).

Kádner did not only deal with the material conditions of families at or below the poverty line, but also with the opposite case, that is, with wealthy families. With a certain amount of exaggeration, he states of both types of families: "One may say that, in fact, a great number of children are actually without the father and the mother, even though both parents are still alive." (Kádner, p. 316).

With reference to the name of this contribution, Kádner's mention of poverty-line families is more relevant for our purposes. We may encounter the family environment Kádner describes above even today, with too many people living in a small space. Family of 5 and more members living in one room at a lodging house are no exception. Such an environment cannot be described either as well suited in pedagogical terms, or as educationally or socially stimulating. It cannot be even called "home", but rather "living space", which is in ideal cases only used to satisfy basic physiological needs of the individual.

Kádner, however, provides not only criticism, but also an answer to the state he describes and also mentions ways of possible solution.

"Of course, those parents have an excuse which is to be conceded even to many parents of the destitute classes: many of them are not at all equipped to the utter minimum with education or training for their vocation of family education, often lacking even the relevant abilities, as namely Luther realised and Spencer reproached emphatically. It is well expressed by Paulsen: "there is not a task in the world which would be undertaken with more recklessness and fulfilled with less care than family education." Very often, then, parents set about educating their children in a naturalist, inadequate and purely arbitrary manner: part of them, as Helvétius already recounts, suffer of postero-mania, i.e. they only see themselves in their children, others order their children around like slaves, yet others consider them as living toys and indulge them with monkey love; and finally, a host of parents even revel in having school rid them of the unpleasant obligation to take care of their own children's education, wherefore they carry nothing with as much displeasure as the longer school holidays. Therefore, the truth lies in Spencer's words when he asserts that the main cause of the lack of family education on the physical, moral and mental part lies in the fact that the parents even lack the very knowledge of how upbringing should be arranged correctly." (Kádner, 1925, pp. 316–317).

Although the previous citations also offer a number of analogies with the present, it is the last one mentioned that brings us the closest to the problems of social exclusion. The world society understands education as the path to a better life, a more successful life and an overall enjoyment of a happier life. Education and its significance was understood in these terms also by Comenius and others. The solution of the problem of the socially excluded also lies in the field of education, in achieving specific qualification, finding a job, living and experiencing life in accordance with some generally accepted principles. However, this can generally only be reached in cooperation with the family, if the family and the school establish a mutually non-cooperative relationship, any effort on the part of school is virtually useless. In the context of unstimulating environment, parental competence or the lack thereof form a major obstacle in the process of social inclusion. Kádner de facto describes the current status where non-profit organizations focus on working with the whole family in connection, for instance, with the work with children in preschool clubs. It is equally necessary to

appreciate Kádner for the objectivity of the information provided in focusing on pathological styles of upbringing which are not always typical of families with social handicaps.

Kádner (1925, p. 318) offers a solution proposal: "Various means of remediation are proposed and tried to address these flaws of family education or rather of parents themselves. The only certainty is that an improvement of social conditions would already mean much in that the parents could devote more of their attention to their children; at other times, it would be beneficial to even more abundantly create auxiliary institutions, especially nurseries, daycares and children's playgroups to whom the poorer parents or those employed outside the house entrust their children for treatment and education and where also the girls and young women could obtain experience of this kind. Furthermore, it would be good if the spouses were informed about their future educational role on time and if appropriate guidance and knowledge on hygienic and pedagogical matters were provided to them upon their marriage in the form of brief brochures and flyers."

This citation can be paraphrased in the present context in two words – parental information. Even though Kádner in many ways understands the institution of his time, which we know well from our time, too, as rather fulfilling a social function, he does note their educational relevance to parents.

In his passage dedicated to the family, Kádner (1925) continues by pointing out good practice examples from both our country and from abroad. In addition to the "courses" (lessons) in schools for female students, he refers to courses organized by pre-schools directly for the parents, a weekly magazine designed for parents, etc. All of this is certainly topical even today.

It may be assumed that the weekly on child rearing, brochures, etc. would probably not have such efficiency in socially excluded families. The courses organised by public institutions, such as nursery and primary schools, would be a much more realistic solution here.

Thus, Otakar Kádner has once again demonstrated an incredible, even shocking currentness of an inspiring nature, or at least provided food for thought (cf. Janiš Jr., 2011a; Janiš Jr., 2011b; Janiš Jr., 2012; Janiš Jr., 2013a; Janiš Jr., 2013b). The part of his work, which was selected for this contribution, additionally proves that the issues of social exclusion can never only be a matter of social work, but they need to become above all a matter of pedagogy.

Let us in conclusion quote Jean Jacques Rousseau (in Kádner, 1925, p. 316): "He who cannot keep the obligations of the father does not have the right to become one. Neither poverty, nor work nor the regard for other people release him from the alimentation and education of his own children. You may believe me, dear reader: I prophesy to anyone who has a heart and has thus neglected such sacred obligations that he will long cry bitter tears over his sin and never find consolation."

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