

# New Themes in Educational Work with Teenagers

## Nová témata při výchovné práci s dospívajícími

Alena Knotková<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

The paper deals with partial results of the research, which was carried out within the framework of a dissertation focused on work with adolescents in the environment of youth homes. The intention of the paper is to present selected themes that are emerging in educational work with adolescents in the last five years in the context of changes in society. The research on which the data is based was conducted using a qualitative strategy in 2023–2024, using a semi-structured interview technique with youth home educators, and grounded theory was used to analyse the data. A sub-section of the research focusing on new themes is briefly presented in the paper. The results of that investigation were summarized in four areas, which were adolescent gender transition as a residential problem, the conflict of demands that come with the transition to high school, the reduction in psychological resilience, and new types of risk behaviours in the context of educator preparedness.

### Keywords:

Adolescents; youth home; gender transition; conflict of demands; psychological resilience


### Abstrakt:

Příspěvek se zabývá dílčími výsledky výzkumu, který byl realizován v rámci disertační práce zaměřené na práci s dospívajícími v prostředí domovů mládeže. Záměrem příspěvku je představení vybraných témat, která se nově objevují ve výchovné práci s dospívajícími v posledních pěti letech v kontextu změn ve společnosti. Výzkum, ze kterého data vycházejí, byl realizován kvalitativní strategií v roce 2023–2024, technikou polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s vychovateli domovů mládeže a k analýze dat byla využita zakotvená teorie. Dílčí část výzkumu zaměřená na nová témata je stručně představena v příspěvku. Výsledky daného šetření byly shrnuty do čtyř oblastí, kterými se staly změna pohlaví dospívajících jako problém ubytovacích zařízení, konflikt nároků přicházející s přestupem na střední školu, snížení psychické odolnosti a nové druhy rizikového chování v kontextu připravenosti pedagogů.

### Klíčová slova:

Dospívající; domov mládeže; změna pohlaví; konflikt nároků; psychická odolnost

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Social Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, The Czech Republic, alena.knotkova@uhk.cz, ORCID 

## Introduction

The paper is devoted to a partial result of the dissertation thesis focused on the educational activity of an educator in a youth home. The author was led to reflect on the results related to the question of new topics in direct work in the youth home environment. The educational profession has always been in the background compared to the teaching profession, even though during adolescence, youth home educators are the ones who spend more than 70% of the time of a normal week with adolescents. They can become role models or confidants for many pupils and students. Changes in society place high demands, among other things, on the profession of educator. The educator should be aware of new trends in educational work with adolescents and should be knowledgeable about the emergence of new topics in the context of adolescents. Arif et al. (2012) describe the so-called "Big Five" personality traits of educators for effective work. They include conscientiousness, which consists of reliability, diligence, perseverance, and responsibility, and emotional stability, which is associated with a calm, secure, happy, and non-anxious personality. Third, he cites agreeableness as manifested by cooperativeness, caring, good-naturedness, courtesy, and trustworthiness. The fourth is extraversion, which is linked not only to the ability to be sociable, but also to be friendly, polite in demeanor, and prompt and flexible. The last he names as openness to experience, which is linked to curiosity, creativity, openness to new experiences and a certain sensitivity and flexibility.

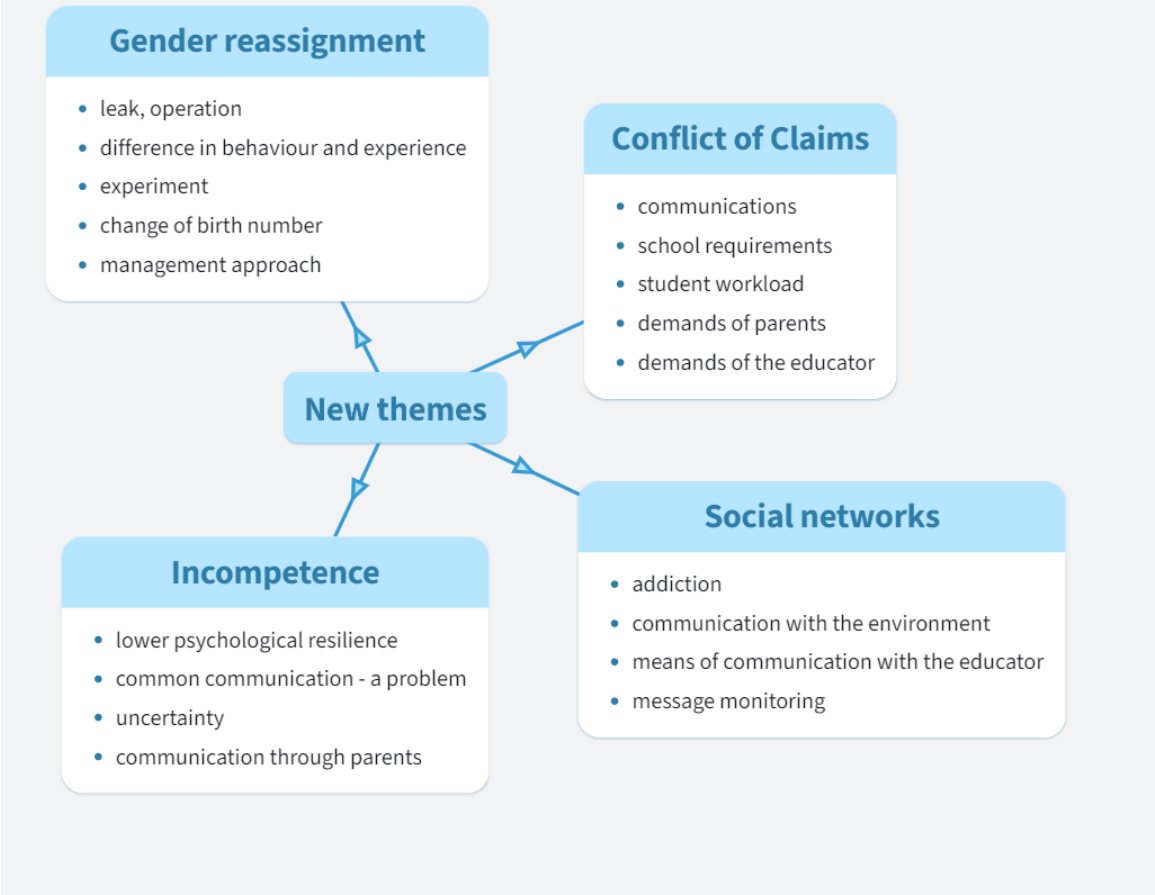
Youth homes in the Czech Republic are defined as educational and accommodation facilities. The activities of youth homes are enshrined in Act No. 561/2004 Coll. on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education, and in Decree No. 108/2005 Coll. The educational unit is an educational group of twenty, maximum thirty pupils. Světlík (2009) approaches schools and educational establishments through the lens of management and marketing. He states that even organizations that do not have profit as their main goal are entering competition. In conjunction with this statement, it is important to note that the client of the facility is not only the student, but also their legal guardians. When profiling individual establishments, it is necessary to take this into account and adapt the services and activities offered to their clients. In the school year 2023/24, 368 youth homes with a bed capacity of 50 627 places were registered in the Czech Republic. Last year, 2 052 educators worked in these establishments, of whom approximately 73 % were women. In 2023/24, 41 155 pupils and students of secondary and higher vocational schools used the services of a youth home (Ministry of Education, 2024).

Bendl (2015) characterizes youth homes as an environment that offers pupils and students accommodation, meals and educational activities in connection with school education. It also provides adolescents with conditions for studying, preparing for classes, which are mainly implemented by providing quiet time during so-called study time, access to the Internet and sometimes the provision of counselling. An equally important mission of the youth home is linked to the management of adolescents to make full and rational use of their free time. Youth homes offer a wide variety of leisure activities, regular interest groups and spontaneous one-off activities. This offer respects the voluntary element. Recently, there has been a decline in the interest of pupils and students in organised activities. For this reason, educators are looking for new ways to involve pupils in leisure activities, both in terms of motivation and in terms of finding new forms, methods and focus.

Pupils arrive at the youth home during a difficult period of adolescence, characterised by challenging processes of adaptation. These include adaptation to a new school environment, new demands and attitudes of teachers, as well as a new class composition. The second area is the change of location. Many adolescents are away from home on their own for the first time during this period, placed in situations where they have to fend for themselves. Last but not least, adaptation affects the accommodation in the youth home. Many residents come from an environment where they had their own room and suddenly have to get along with others, be considerate of each other and tolerate the needs of others. This is compounded by the requirements of the youth home to follow the rules.

**Research**

Knotková (2024) focused her dissertation research on the implementation of the curriculum in a youth home from the perspective of the educator. The research was conducted using a qualitative strategy using the grounded theory method. This paper focuses on the sub-research question and the sub-research aim. The aim is to find out what new themes emerge in direct work with pupils in a youth home. The respondents were 10 male and female tutors with more than 3 years of experience. Data collection was stopped when the data was no longer repeated and no new information was emerging. Figure 1 presents the treatment of the area under open coding. Four categories were created from the codes.



**Picture 1** Categories and codes (author)

The first category arose from codes that appeared in almost all interviews. It is the issue of the youth home in the context of gender reassignment among students. One

interviewee states that they have pupils of different spectrum at the youth home and the educators do not have much information on how to deal with them. Another respondent describes the current situation at the youth home where they have a girl who is becoming a boy. She is currently undergoing hormone treatment and changes in behaviour and experience can be observed. Other respondents describe that they work closely with the guardians and follow the directives of the management, which has clearly defined the situation where the individual is still considered a girl and when she becomes a boy and vice versa. They associate the whole process with the overall biological transformation and the change of birth number. All respondents agree that they accommodate requests as much as possible and mostly accommodate individuals undergoing gender reassignment in separate rooms.

The second category was associated with demands on the individual. Conflict of entitlement arise between the demands by the school. Their number and demandingness significantly affects the leisure time of pupils and students in the youth home. On the other side are the legal guardians who naturally want their child to have the best possible academic results. Third, the educator enters into this conflict, trying to perceive the needs of the pupil for relaxation, compensation and regeneration. Last enters the pupil himself and his competence not only to learn. Parental pressure is coupled with curfews or bans on participation in extracurricular activities. School pressure is linked to the benefits and grades. Educators are spurred to action by management. Thus, the adolescent finds himself between millstones looking for a way out.

Another area that educators see as a hot topic is social networking. One respondent describes his experience of demanding a ban on mobile phones at organisational meetings as an element that was perceived by pupils almost as a "threat" leading to panicky behaviour. Another respondent states that in daily contact with pupils neither do not look at the educators when talking because they are constantly „watching the news." One educator, due to the proximity in age, chooses to communicate with students via social media and is satisfied with this choice.

The last theme that emerged more in the respondents' statements was the theme of not being self-sufficient. Most of the respondents had experience with parents who solved everything for the children. This included trivial things like changing the duvet at the beginning of the school year, to accommodation changes, to routine decisions and arrangements such as bus passes, finding the best route to school. The problem arises, for example, when a pupil's health deteriorates and instead of going to the teacher, he or she has to deal with the parents. on the phone.

The next phase of the research investigation was axial coding. Thus, among the new themes, besides gender changes and conflict of demands, the personality of the pupil and its changes (lack of independence, reduced psychological resilience) as well as risk behaviour were included. The new themes are reflected in the educator's choice of educational goals, and they significantly influence the educator in terms of motivation, choice of methods and forms. New themes arise mainly from daily contact with the pupil and are influenced by the educator's experience and personality, but also by the possibilities and limits of the institution.

The paradigmatic model according to Strauss and Corbin was used to consider the context. The reasoning is illustrated using the following diagram: causal conditions - phenomenon - context - intervening conditions - strategies and actions - consequences.

Examples of reasoning:

- ✓ covid, demands of school, demands of guardians, adolescence – panic attacks, not coping with the situation - lower level of psychological resilience, lack of independence - personality of the educator, counselling centre, sharing of experiences, influence of the group - new forms and methods - individual interviews, changes in the approach to the pupil - changes in the curriculum, changes in the environment - relaxation zones, playground,
- ✓ adolescence, maladaptation, changes in society – risky behaviour - change in behaviour, withdrawing into oneself, violation of internal rules - self-education of educators, counselling centre, inspiration - acting according to internal rules, new methods and forms in the implementation of the prevention programme - changes in the School Education Programme, focus of educators' training, modifications of internal rules,
- ✓ demands of the school, demands of the youth home on the implementation of the the School Education Programme - conflict of demands - implementation of the the School Education Programme, pupil's free time, personality of the educator - environment of the youth home, educator-pupil relationship - order, rules, regularity - readability, trust, fair play, positive climate of the educational groups,
- ✓ mismatch between psychological and anatomical sex, adolescence - sex change - implementation of the SSP, youth home environment, climate of educational groups - possibilities and limits of the youth home - adjustment of conditions, new methods and forms, rules - change of the SSP, internal rules, new requirements for adjustment.

## Conclusion

In today's world, new themes are emerging that also touch on the field of education and adolescents. These include the issues of adolescents' lower psychological resilience and lack of independence, gender reassignment, new forms of risky behaviour and the conflicts that affect adolescents as they move from primary to secondary school. Youth homes have a great advantage in having a relatively large degree of freedom in developing the School Curriculum, which is then transposed into educational programmes for the educational work of the educator with the group. The question remains to what extent the educators are trained not only in terms of information, but above all in terms of experience and the use of methods and forms. The research carried out in Knotková's dissertation (2024) revealed modest knowledge on the part of educators regarding the possibilities in the choice of forms and methods, new topics of the possibility of further self-education. Thus, there is room for the development of further education of educators in the field of direct work of educators in the context of the use of forms and methods with a focus on experiential learning in the form of an experiential course in conjunction with new topics.

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### **Author:**

Mgr. Alena Knotková, Ph.D.

University of Hradec Králové,

Faculty of Education, Institute of Social Studies

The Czech Republic

[alena.knotkova@uhk.cz](mailto:alena.knotkova@uhk.cz)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7178-6405>

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