10th ICEEPSY 2019
International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology

A START OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FROM THE FUTURE TEACHERS´ PERSPECTIVE

Iva Košek Bartošová (a, b)*, Dora Janouchová (b), Hana Kleprlíková (c)
*Corresponding author

(a) Iva Košek Bartošová, University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: iva.kosekbartosova@uhk.cz
(b) Dora Janouchová, University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: dora.janouchova@uhk.cz
(c) Hana Kleprlílová, University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
E-mail: hana.kleprlikova@uhk.cz

Abstract

The research deals with an issue of pupils' entrance into a first class of primary school in the Czech Republic. The research focus is an analysis of pupils' first school day (categorization of activities with creating model typology – scenarios of course of the first school day) and furthermore adaptation analysis of the classroom during the first school week from the future teachers´ perspective (student teachers for the 1st grade of primary school). Monitored period represents a very significant feature towards a school and for its adaptation from the pupils' and parents' perspective. Based on an open coding we have set 16 categories of activities of the first school day and with the help of a cluster analysis of individual categories there were five combinations of activities created – a first day scenario. At the same time based on a comparison it was found that there is no statistically significant difference among individual types of scenarios and a total level of a classroom´s adaptation during the first week of teaching. The results allow us create in the further phase a design of an optimal first day of school for quality adaption of pupils during first days of an educating process at school.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: First school day, typology of scenarios, adaptation of pupils.

1. Introduction

To attract a pupil and parents on the first school day during a short morning programme is highly demanding and binding for the teacher, who is introducing the child into a school world.

According to the fact that the following issues has not been described enough and researched deeply in literature, we consider this research focused on a content analysis and categorization of activities of the first school day as unique and fruitful.

1.1. Theoretical basis

Professional articles could be found in foreign sources which deal with several aspects of the first school day and its meaning etc. (e.g. Gutteling, de Weerth, & Buitelaar, 2005; Brooks, 1985). Mostly these publications are primarily intended to parents of future first graders, how to prepare them for the school entrance, what to have with on the first school day, what expectations to have, or they deal with the area how to make contact with other pupils just right on the first day of school entrance (Peters, 2010). There is not such a professional monograph in Czech language dedicated to the topic of organization and structure of the first school day and week of a primary school´s first grade. There is not such a publication which would help teachers to cope and manage the first school day of the 1st grade class. However our experts from the field of pedagogy (Bednářová & Šmardová, 2017; Beníšková, 2007; Franclová, 2013) and psychology (Říčan, 2010; Langmeier & Krejčířová, 2006; Vacínová, 1989) repeatedly warn that first moments at school represent a key experience which might influence further life of the individual, both in terms of future school performance as well as many other consequences (a course of adaptation, management of transition crisis, course of school socialization, relationship to authority, self-concept, awareness of self-efficacy, etc. (Valsiner, 1988, 2013).

2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research is to identify what activities of the first school day attendance exist and what might occur (based on a cluster analysis) typology of scenarios – models of the first school day. The intention is also to find out (based on and analysis and open coding), what is the classroom´s adaptation during the first school week and to observe the context among scenarios of the first school day programme and a level of pupils' adaptation during the first school week of attendance.

3. Research Questions

Within the research we would like to find answers to the following questions: What are the most frequent categories of activities applied during the first school day in the 1st class? Do activities which were applied during the first day of school influence pupils´ adaptation?

4. Research Methods

According to set goals of the research a mixed research design was used. In the first phase there was provided an open coding and a categorization of a first school day observation as well as levels and

connections with adaptation during a first school attendance week within a period of five years (2014-2018). The technique of an open coding is "...*quite universal and a very effective way, how to start up a data analysis"* (Švaříček & Šeďová, 2014, p. 211). Three independent experts provided categorization and coding (two students of the 4th year of Teaching studies for the 1st grade of primary school – co-authors and leaders of the research team). Typology of models – scenarios of the first school day were made based on a cluster analysis in the second phase of the research. At the end of the research phase with the help of chi – quadrat test results of level of classroom´s adaptation was compared (from the student´s perspective) and a scenario type of the first school day obtained from a cluster analysis.

4.1. Research sample

The research sample consists of first grade primary school pupils. During the period of years 2014 – 2018 there were N = 232 hours submitted (Table 01) in order to observe the first school day in September in the 1st grade classroom in total of 232 primary schools (there were 5152 primary school classrooms ´pupils observed). One can talk about a deliberate selection of the research sample. All of the observers were student teachers of the Teaching for 1st grade of Primary school (involved 230 student teachers). The same pupils – respondents were observed in terms of adaptation of students during the whole time of the first school week.

Table 01. Layout of the research sample according to a year of data collection

Year	Frequency	[%]
2014	57	24,57
2015	47	20,26
2016	57	24,57
2017	40	17,24
2018	31	13,36
Total	**232**	**100**

5. Findings

There is a great attention paid to the issue of the first school day and week mainly to general public. Nevertheless, our intention was to find out, analyse and categorize activities, which are mainly applied on the first primary school classroom day. Furthermore, to concentrate, confirm or disprove, whether individual models (scenarios) of the first school day might have a statistically significant influence on the level of classroom´s adaptation during the first school week.

The research was divided into three parts. The first part was dedicated to an *analysis and categorization of activities of the first school day of 1st grade classroom pupils* during the years 2014 - 2018.

The second part was focused with the help of a cluster analysis *to create a typology of models – scenarios of first school day activities* based on emerging categories over the same period.

In the third part there was at first a *classroom adaptation analysis during the first school week of school attendance* and then followed by a *comparison of the total level of classroom´s adaptation* based

on the students´ point of view within observation of the first week in the 1st grade classroom and *a model typology of the first day* made by with the help of the chi – quadrat test.

Considering the scope of the article we will focus on the most important insights, which should contribute to creating a proposal for an optimal first school day within further research.

4.1. Analysis and categorization of the first school day activities

Based on the analysis and coding we set 16 categories by a technique of open coding (mainly pedagogical and organizational) out of 232 records of observing from the first day at school, which represent activities during the first school day (Table 02).

Table 02. Category overview – activities of the first school day

Categories – activities of the first school day	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total frequency
1 Headmaster´s speech, Mayor´s speech	46	43	49	36	26	200
2 Introducing pupils with school/classroom	14	6	6	8	5	39
3 Ice-breaking games for pupils	9	4	3	4	2	22
4 Information to parents	31	30	32	26	22	141
5 Giving gifts from school, town, county	33	22	28	26	13	122
6 Introduction oneself	9	6	5	4	8	32
7 Reading a fairy tale	5	1	3	2	0	11
8 Singing a song	4	2	12	3	3	24
9 Learning a poem	7	8	8	2	8	33
10 Awarding a commemorative sheet to pupils	14	8	13	6	6	47
11 Giving sweets to pupils	7	8	5	3	1	24
12 Ceremonial opening out of school premises	15	27	20	18	12	92
13 Giving pupils sashes, badges and ribbons	7	5	10	2	4	28
14 Allocating an older pupil to "the first grader"	7	8	4	5	5	29
15 Pupil get their first homework	6	6	4	1	2	19
16 Performance of older pupils	0	8	1	3	4	16
Total	214	192	203	149	121	879

As we can see, from the above mentioned activities – categories, the most frequent one is the welcoming speech of a headmaster or a mayor. The second and the third most frequent are represented by categories where parents get information about the school operation (signature of documents – application forms to school clubs, afterschool club etc.) and pupils are given commemorative gifts (colouring pencils, colour books, safety items…). A ceremonial opening out of school which takes place on a square, a town hall or in a festive hall or other places is attractive too. Pupils also consider being given a commemorative sheet, i.e. to be accolated to be "the first grader ". What we can also see in Czech schools that the first grader could get an older pupil from the 9th class or any grades. The older pupil takes care of the "new first grader ", i.e. visits him/her during school breaks, give a helping hand, waits for him/her in front of school at least for the period of one month.

We consider activities to be positive when a teacher tries to involve pupils into activities within the first lesson, such as singing, learning a poem, reading a fairy tale, introducing with classmates or playing introductory/ice breaking games.

From the above mentioned activities we consider as the least suitable giving sweets to children or the very used activity to give information to parents during the first introductory lesson. The act is ceremonial, where not just only pupils and parents participate but also grandparents and relatives. Therefore, is recommended to pass information and material to be signed during a preparatory meeting before school year or during following days.

The analysis of individual activities was supplemented by photography of pupils, chaos in a classroom or handing over course books and school aids, which occurred at a low frequency and therefore we did not mention them in further processing.

4.2. Typology of models – the first school day activity scenario

A cluster analysis of individual subcategories (programme activities) of the first school day was made in the next step. Only variables, whose distribution was higher more than 10 %, i.e. those 12 variables were selected into the cluster analysis: categories 1-2, 4-6, 8-14. There was a two-step cluster analysis, which result points out at the existence of 5 different combination of activities - categories, so called scenarios. Research results/see below) point out at that activities no. 6, 8, 9, 13 and 14 do not occur among scenarios – probably because, that are generally under-represented (all of them show a distribution less than 15 %). There is a typical occurrence of the following combined items for the 5 detected scenarios:

• Scenario 1**:** headmaster´s speech

• Scenario 2: headmaster´s speech, information to parents and giving a commemorative sheet

• Scenario 3: headmaster´s speech, giving school gifts … and a ceremonial opening out of school

• Scenario 4: headmaster´s speech, introducing pupils with school/classroom, information to parents, handing over gifts from school…and giving sweets to pupils

• Scenario 5: headmaster´s speech, information to parents, handing over gifts from school

In principle, scenario 1 differs from others, which is only characteristic for its headmaster´s speech; scenario 3, which differs from others in the ceremony out of school and scenario 4, which contains a school tour and a classroom. Table 03 shows representation of individual detected scenario.

Table 03. Representation of detected scenarios in percentage

Scenario Number	Representation in percentage
1	24,2
2	20,8
3	14,3
4	24,2
5	16,5
Total	100

From the given results is possible to see, that that most frequent scenario activities used are actually the headmaster´s speech or the town´s or village deputy´s (scenario no. 4), when pupils are introduced with their school/classroom, are given gifts or sweets from school/town and information for parents at the same time. It would be certainly worth considering to observe other context according to detected scenarios.

4.3. Comparison the whole level of classroom adaptation and typology of the first day model

In the last phase of the research for our contribution we focus on the categorization of the classroom adaptation during the first school week. Open coding lead to assignation of 2 categories for a description of adaptation of the first week of school attendance. The first category was called "adaptation – overall level "and was described in three levels the overall view from the adaptation (Table 04):

• very good – indicates a classroom, where no maladaptation is manifested,

• good – indicates a classroom, where adaptation went well but slower than in comparison with the first category,

• with problems – indicates a classroom, where at least one pupil showed maladaptation difficulties, for example was crying, had a lack of concentration, had problems with speech...

Table 04. Achieved level of adaptation

Adaptation - level	Frequency	Percent
1 Very good	41	17,67
2 Good	87	37,50
3 With some problems	104	44,83
Total	**232**	**100**

The table shows frequencies of three adaptation levels, as were stated above. From the table is clear that ca 45 % of classrooms showed a problematic adaptation, where at least one pupil faced maladaptation difficulties. It is advisable to realize that almost 18 % of classrooms showed an adaptation on a very good level.

The second category, which was created based on open coding technique and was called "Adaptation *consequences and potential causes of maladaptation* "and describes some of the observed or deduced consequences during the course and result adaptation. For the purpose of coding out of original 17 variants were merged into 5 possibilities (Table 05).

Table 05. Adaptation context and potential causes of maladaptation

Adaptation	Shown in %	Not shown in %
1 joint transition of children from kindergarten, everyone knows each other	17,2	82,8
2 initial shyness of some pupils	37,9	62,1
3 worse communication with others, lack of concentration	6,5	93,5
4 pupil in a classroom, who was crying	37,1	62,9
5 children had no habits from kindergarten	10,8	89,2

Frequencies of individual subcategories of adaptation context are represented in Table 5. The table shows the fact that the most represented ones are: the initial shyness (approximately one third of the cases) and that some of the pupils cry in a classroom (reason - nostalgia, no homework, forgotten school aid kid, wrong school aid etc.). Other variants are less represented. The subcategory – worse communication, lack of concentration, does not even reach a tenth of the cases.

In the last phase there was the chi-quadrat test (χ2) and a contingent table was made between a type of the detected scenario and a total level of adaptation with the aim to assess whether some of the identified scenario shows better results in the adaptation than others. Result value of results (χ2=8,040, df=8, p=0,430) shows, that there are no statistically provable differences in a total of achieved level of adaptation (Table 06).

Table 06. Relation between a scenario type and a level of adaptation

Scenario/adaptation	1 very well	2 well	3 with problems	Total
Scenario 1 (n=56)	21,40 %	**44,60 %**	**33,90 %**	100,00 %
Scenario 2 (n=48)	14,60 %	37,50 %	47,90 %	100,00 %
Scenario 3 (n=34)	18,20 %	30,30 %	51,50 %	100,00 %
Scenario 4 (n=56)	10,70 %	41,10 %	48,20 %	100,00 %
Scenario 5 (n=38)	**26,30 %**	28,90 %	44,70 %	100,00 %
Total (n=232)	17,70 %	37,70 %	44,60 %	100,00 %

Table 6 shows percentage rate distribution of the adaptation level in individual detected scenarios. From the obtained values is clear that the highest percentage of adaptation level 1 (very good adaptation) were reached in classrooms, where applied programme activities were provided on the first school day, which are the closest to the scenario 5 (26,3 % of classrooms from this group of scenarios), the lowest percentage of level adaptation 1 (very good adaptation) was reached in classrooms, where applied programme activities were used on the first school day which were the closest to the scenario 4 (10,7 %). We state only the most interesting knowledge in terms of the allowed contribution range.

6. Results´ summary and a conclusion

The analysis of the first school day attendance with creating typology of scenarios and the classroom adaptation analysis from the first school week represented the main target of the research (categorization of activities). We were also interested in the fact whether there is an existence of consequences among individual scenarios of the first school day and a total level of adaptation of pupils during their first school week of attendance.

As had been stated, based on open coding there were created 19 categories – activities of the first school day. According to the low frequency three of them were eliminated (introduction with course books, organized photography and bad organization of the day). The most frequent activity in general is represented by the authority´s speech (headmaster, mayor), shown almost in 90 % of all analysed cases. Further the most frequent category is passing information to parents and giving documents to be signed (approximately in two thirds of the cases). We do not consider the following category for the first school day for suitable and recommend to place the activity in another term. Which can be provided in the way

that parents leave the classroom and get the information in other school premises and therefore pupils stay with their teacher for further activities (ice breaking games, songs, drawing, getting to know the school etc.).

Created scenarios – models of the first school day obtained from the cluster analysis are certainly interesting, however for our further research and teachers from practice do not have such value. On the contrary certainly very interesting and fruitful is the analysis of pupils´ adaptation during the first school week of learning in the 1st grade classroom. Less positive is represented in the result where ca 45 % of classroom shows a problematic adaptation. At least one pupil has maladaptation difficulties. There would be worth analysis what the cause is. As well as the result that ca 18 % of classrooms has a very good adaptation. Certainly a deeper reflection and further research (mainly psychological) would deserve a result, where one third of cases is shy and other cry.

In the conclusion of our research we were looking for a relationship between a type of scenario and a level of adaptation. There are no statistically significant proved differences between individual types of scenarios in the overall level of adaptation. The results show that four out of five scenarios show about a half of classrooms with adaptation difficulties, only the scenario 1 has the given percentage significantly lower (33,9 %). We do not know what the cause is. Would be certainly interesting to consider further psychological research.

The contribution of the whole research is to analyse the work of teacher during the first school day in terms of future teachers' perspective and to create a typology of scenarios of the first school day. In the next phase of the research we would find out pupils' views form higher grades how they remembered their first school day and a week. To what extent it was important and interesting to them. Obtained data will be further processed and used to determine a proposal of an optimum first day of school for high-quality adaptation of pupils during their first days of primary school.

References

Bednářová, J., & Šmardová, V. (2017). *Školní zralost* [School readiness]. Brno: Computer Press, a.s.

Beníšková, T. (2007). *První třída bez place* [First class without crying]. Praha: Grada

Brooks, D. M. (1985). The teacher's communicative competence: The first day of school. *Theory into Practice*, *24*(1), 63-70.

Franclová, M. (2013). *Zahájení školní docházky* [Starting school]. Praha: Grada.

Gutteling, B. M., de Weerth, C., & Buitelaar, J. K. (2005). Prenatal stress and children's cortisol reaction to the first day of school. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *30*(6), 541-549.

Langmeier, J., & Krejčířová, D. (2006). *Vývojová psychologie* [Developmental Psychology]. Praha: Grada.

Peters, S. (2003). "I Didn't Expect That I Would Get Tons of Friends More Each Day": Children's experiences of friendship during the transition to school. *Early Years*, *23*(1), 45-53.

Říčan, P. (2010). *Psychologie osobnosti* [Psychology of personality]. Praha: Grada.

Švaříček, R. & Šeďová, K a kol. (2014). *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách* [Qualitative research in educational sciences]. Praha: Portál.

Vacínová, M. (1989). *Některé psychologické aspekty vstupu dítěte do školy* [Some psychological aspects of a child entering school]. Praha: Univerzita Karlova.

Valsiner, J. (1988). *Child Development Within Culturally Structured Environments: Social co-construction and environmental guidance in development.* Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Valsiner, J. (2013). *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology*. Oxford University Press.