

<p>X. GIMNAZIJA „IVAN SUPEK“</p> <p>Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje Liceo Scientifico Statale Seguenza Gymnázium Pavla Jozefa Šafárika Střední škola Náhorní Aquilonis d.o.o.</p> 	  
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Handbook for reluctant, struggling and poor readers</i></b> (project no. - 2016-1-HR01-KA201-022159) <b>Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union</b></p>	

### **01.A1. Critical review**

We have been hearing about *reading issues* for quite a long time. Again and again kids and teenagers are blamed for not reading enough. However, the question is what it actually means *enough*. Is it a book a month? Is it a book a week? Is the book thin or thick? The quantity is what matters. We usually ask: How much do you read? On the other hand, not many people are interested in *what* we actually read. Although there is at least one more important question: How do you understand what you are reading? That should really be the most important information we need to find out.

The fact is that pupils with low reading literacy have problems to participate in society and they struggle with finding jobs when they become adults. That is the reason why reading literacy has become a crucial key competence within curricula in all developed countries.

According to the Czech Ministry of Education, reading literacy should be developed not only by teachers of Czech language and literature but it should be done within most of the subjects. All teachers need to use different sorts of texts for the purpose of teaching their subjects and students should be able to work with those texts – find relevant sources of information, read it, understand, find important information, compare, interpret the information, discuss the issue etc.

Today, there are also loads of different sources and types of texts available – e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, school books, e-books, the internet etc. Students should be able to sort out the information coming from all the sides, work with the resources – compare and choose the most relevant information.

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First of all, we need to help pupils create a positive relationship to books. We should stop ordering them to read books hundred years old far away from their interest and everyday life. It would be much easier to begin with books or stories they really like. Actually, this policy has been supported by most of the experts. There is a lot of contemporary literature that some of us, teachers might not like or approve but which could be used as a kind of bridge to the “real” or “classic” literature.

What we should do is not to force pupils read more and more; instead, we should teach them how to like and enjoy reading; after that, they will be able to find the way themselves. Schools should serve as a kind of meeting point of literature with an ability to offer different sorts of interesting texts, providing a platform for discussion including experience and opinion exchange.

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### **01.A1.2 State of art**

Reading literacy could be understood as one's all-life developing skill consisting of different elements influencing one another: relationship to reading, literal understanding, apprehension and evaluation, metacognition, sharing, and application.<sup>1</sup>

The Czech Republic has participated in different international reading literacy surveys since the mid 90's. At the beginning there were surveys like RLS, IALS, PIRLS organized by IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement); later PISA organized by OECD – a survey with the highest credit nowadays. According to the definition of PISA, reading literacy is understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.

In PISA 2009 the Czech Republic gained 478 points; three years later, the same test showed the score of 492 points with the average score of 500 points and Shanghai winning reaching 570 points. In other words, our country ended up approximately in the middle of all tested countries. All the details are available on the websites of the Czech School Inspection.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, the Czech Ministry of Education approved a new programme for educating children and teenagers from 3 to 19 years. This new framework gives schools and teachers a chance to build up their own school educational programmes and approaches towards individual subjects. Reading literacy is mentioned as one of so called key competencies and

<sup>1</sup> in *Vyukove strategie v praxi pilotnich skol*: p. 48; available from [http://www.nuov.cz/uploads/KURIKULUM/vyukove\\_strategie\\_na\\_web.pdf](http://www.nuov.cz/uploads/KURIKULUM/vyukove_strategie_na_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.csicr.cz/Prave-menu/Mezinarodni-setreni>

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its development is understood as a task to be completed by all teachers, not only the teachers of Czech language and literature who naturally feel the biggest responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

In 2013, a group of secondary-school Czech language teachers formed the Association of Czech language teachers<sup>4</sup> serving as a kind of platform for sharing ideas, discussions and also communication with super-ordinal institutions. Reading literacy has become one of their main issues and this topic evokes lots of emotions.

In the past, when teaching literature, teachers stressed historical facts in the first place – memorising tons of dates, names, numbers etc. and reading itself used to be second. There were no discussions about literature, nobody asked what students liked reading or what they would like to read and why. There used to be a set list of books and authors that students were supposed to “know something about” – mostly encyclopedic facts: the date/place of birth/death, the parents’ jobs, education, names of books, years they were published... The problem is that the approach to teaching literature has not really changed in spite of the above mentioned theoretical and official movements.

Another thing is that since 2011 all secondary-school students in the Czech Republic have to take the state-controlled final exam (maturita) from Czech language and literature. There are several requirements which students have to fulfil to pass the exam. A lot of teachers complain that the structure of the exam goes against the freedom given by the framework and they have no chance to change much because there is simply no space and time for anything else than memorising again.

<sup>3</sup> in *Vyukove strategie v praxi pilotnich skol*: p. 49

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ascestaru.cz>

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On the other hand, most teachers still follow the old chronological model of teaching literature – they start from the very beginning, spend a long time with the ancient literature, slowly move through every single century. This systematical approach might make sense, however, the problem is that students feel like learning about far history – usually there is no time to talk about contemporary authors and topics involving somehow the lives of the students. That just supports the feeling that literature is a kind of theoretical science and not a part of their everyday lives.

The experts actually agree on the basic and simple approach which should be followed to make literature more attractive to pupils. We should stop ordering them to read books hundred years old far away from their interest and everyday life. It would be much easier to begin with books or stories they really like and, in the first place, make some space for analysing and discussing the texts. It is not necessary to work with books only; especially at the beginning with struggling or poor readers, we could use films, internet articles or even PC games as sources for analyses and discussions in the class. As we can read opinions of some teachers – it is possible to go this way and there are visible fruits of this work. The most important thing the teacher needs to start is the will to change something and to work hard especially at the beginning.

Various sorts of institutions have been trying to deal with the problem of poor reading literacy. The Czech School Inspection has analysed loads of lessons, approaches and activities<sup>5</sup>; libraries invite schools with their students for meeting authors, discussions; schools and other institutions (local governments, libraries, bookshops, publishing houses etc.) organise competitions and other activities to attract young people to literature.

<sup>5</sup> Tematická zpráva, Česká školní inspekce, Praha 2013; available from [http://clanky.rvp.cz/wp-content/uploads/prilohy/18167/tematicka\\_zprava.pdf](http://clanky.rvp.cz/wp-content/uploads/prilohy/18167/tematicka_zprava.pdf)

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There have been various researches, articles or thesis processed on reading habits or reading literacy of Czech pupils, the following ones are just a few examples:

- Tematická zpráva, Česká školní inspekce, Praha 2013; available from [http://clanky.rvp.cz/wp-content/upload/prilohy/18167/tematicka\\_zprava.pdf](http://clanky.rvp.cz/wp-content/upload/prilohy/18167/tematicka_zprava.pdf)
- *Čtenáři a čtení v ČR*, research 2013, available from [http://ipk.nkp.cz/docs/cteni-2013/Cteni\\_Vyzkum\\_2013.pdf](http://ipk.nkp.cz/docs/cteni-2013/Cteni_Vyzkum_2013.pdf)
- Švejda J.: Čtenářská gramotnost – postoje ke čtenářství na střední škole, MU Brno 2010, master thesis; available from [https://is.muni.cz/th/345336/pedf\\_m/Diplomova\\_prace.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/th/345336/pedf_m/Diplomova_prace.pdf)
- Vondrová V.: Problematika čtenářství v adolescentním věku, Hradec Králové University 2016, master thesis; available from <https://theses.cz/id/b410n0/STAG82279.pdf>
- Mašová H.: Výzkum čtenářství žáků základních škol, MU Brno 2009, bachelor thesis, available from [https://is.muni.cz/th/185751/pedf\\_b/Bakalarska\\_prace-komplet.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/th/185751/pedf_b/Bakalarska_prace-komplet.pdf)
- *Paradoxy výzkumů čtenářství* in Učitel'ské noviny 17/2008; available from <http://www.ucitelskenoviny.cz/?archiv&clanek=1070>