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### ON THE STATE OF CZECH RESEARCH IN HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THE "LONG" 19TH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** This study displays the results of Czech research into the history of education from around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1918. It focuses primarily on the work of Czech historians since 1989, though it also gives an extensive account of the situation in Czech historiography during the preceding decades. The text outlines key topics and areas of research, traces important trends in historical scholarship, and presents the main results achieved by research focusing on educational history. It also offers an assessment of progress in research to date, pointing out certain gaps (topics which have so far been neglected by scholars) and outlining possible avenues for future research focusing on educational history in the Bohemian Crown Lands during the period in question. The author's aim was to provide a comprehensive range of information and a basic overview of the current state of Czech research in this area.

*Keywords:* History of education, historiography, 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century, research, Czech Republic.

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## СОСТОЯНИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ИСТОРИИ ОБУЧЕНИЯ И ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В «ДОЛГОМ» XIX В. В ЧЕШСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКЕ

This study was produced as a part of the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) grant no 13-28086S *Historický proces modernizace (na příkladu rakouského Slezska)* [The Historical Process of Modernization (The case of Austrian Silesia)]

**Аннотация:** В статье представлены результаты изучения истории образования в Чешской Республике с конца XVIII в. по 1918 г. Внимание автора сосредоточено,

прежде всего, на работах чешских исследователей, изданных после 1989 г., однако достаточное внимание уделено и предшествующим историческим трудам. Данная работа посвящена основополагающим исследовательским темам и областям изучения указанной проблематики. В статье прослеживаются ведущие направления исследований и их предполагаемые результаты. Также автор уделяет внимание так называемым «белым пятнам» (темам, чаще всего выходящим за рамки интересов исследователей) и возможным перспективам дальнейшего изучения образования в Чешских землях в избранный период. Целью автора является предоставление читателю комплексной информации и основного обзора состояния тематических исследований в Чешской Республике.

**Ключевые слова:** история образования, историография, XVIII–XX вв., исследования, Чехия.

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# The history of education in the "long" 19th century as a specific research problem, the focus and methodological basis of the study

The period known in Central European — and especially Czech — historiography as the "long" 19th century is usually defined as lasting from the final quarter of the 18th century to the outbreak of the First World War (or to the end of the war in 1918). This period was characterized by the emergence and increasing prevalence of processes which contributed to the transformation from a traditional estates-based society into a modern society, stratified into social classes and based on civil principles. Key elements include the complex process of modernization, the course and consequences of the Industrial Revolution, industrialization, urbanization, professionalization, progress in the emancipation of individual national or religious groups, and the formation of civil society. As these processes unfolded during the long 19th century, the transformation grew increasingly dynamic, affecting ever-larger sections of the population. Due to the number of social factors that were active throughout this period, historians (whether social, cultural or economic in their focus) frequently view the long 19th century as a single entity, though they may subdivide it in various ways.

A major role in social, economic and cultural development during this period was played by education. Historians from other countries (especially Britain, Germany, France and the USA) began to explore this aspect long before it came to the attention of their Czech counterparts. Departing from the traditional concept of educational history, from the 1960s onwards these historians increasingly perceived educational institutions (including their students and teachers) as an integral part of the overall socio-cultural, economic and political context of social development. Chronological descriptions of the development and institutional transformation of selected educational institutions (mainly universities and academically-oriented secondary schools) was replaced by a modern conception which took a comprehensive approach to the issue. In the (social) history of education, secondary and tertiary-level educational institutions are viewed as an important factor in shaping cultural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Key figures in this regard include Brian Simon, Robert D. Anderson, Charles R. Day, Christophe Charle, Patrick J. Harrigan, James C. Albisetti, Detlef K. Müller, Fritz Ringer, Margret Kraul, Hartmut Kaelble, Peter Lundgreen, Konrad H. Jarausch and Gary B. Cohen.

development, emancipation and social mobility, also serving as a means of assimilation and social integration. Besides their primary role as education providers, the social role of educational institutions and their activities is also a focus of researchers' attention. Some studies focus on students — exploring the composition of the student body, the distribution of educational chances across society, students' academic and professional aspirations, and their engagement in civic activities and public life as representatives of the intelligentsia. Other studies focus on teachers — tracing their origins, career path and activities outside the education system. Other areas of research include educational policy at the level of the state or local elites, as well as the influence of social, economic and political developments on education systems.

The aim of the present study is to provide an account of the main findings of research focusing on the history of education in the Bohemian Crown Lands from the end of the 18th century to the birth of the independent Czechoslovak state in 1918. Due to space constraints, the study necessarily takes a selective approach, focusing its attention on the main trends, central topics and examples of research that for various reasons can be evaluated as particularly insightful and stimulating from both thematic and methodological perspectives. My aim is to provide non-Czech readers with basic information on Czech historical research in this field, as well as drawing attention to some topics which have not yet been fully addressed and outlining potential avenues for future research. The text is structured in two chronologically distinct parts, with 1989 forming the boundary line between them; this was a year that represented a milestone in the political and social development of the former Czechoslovakia (due to the regime change that resulted from the so-called Velvet Revolution in November 1989) and also opened up a new chapter in Czech historiography. The choice of 1989 as the boundary line enables us to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and context of Czech research on educational history in the early 1990s — research which in some aspects continued to draw on previous work, while also seeking new and innovative directions both in topics and methodology. It should be noted that additional information on Czech research of the history of education and pedagogy can also be found in previously published overviews [21; 30; 48; 52].

### The dominant traditional conception of educational history in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century before 1989

The traditional conception of educational history in the Bohemian Crown Lands emerged during the second half of the 19th century. Leaving aside locally and regionally focused studies by amateur historians (where the descriptive, institution-based approach to educational history still remains prevalent to this day), this traditional conception had a major influence on historiographic research until the end of the 1980s — both in works addressing selected topics from the long 19th century and in studies with a different or more general focus. This does not diminish the contribution made by many of these studies, which — despite some limitations stemming from the era in which they were written (especially methodological limitations) — have still not been superseded in terms of their factual content.

For many years, the period from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not at the forefront of historians' interest. Most research into educational history concerned education in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, addressing topics such as the foundation and development of Charles University in Prague (established by Charles IV in 1348), the development of municipal education and education provided by religious orders, and the educational activities of the Unity of the Brethren (Jednota bratrská, Unitas Fratrum) — including figures such as Václav Vladivoj Tomek, Zikmund Winter, František

Jan Zoubek, František Drtina and others. Interest in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century emerged mainly in connection with attempts to legitimize and support attempts at national emancipation by the Czech-speaking population of the Bohemian Crown Lands — a population which was disadvantaged in comparison to some other communities in the Habsburg Monarchy (e.g. Bohemian, Moravian, Silesian and Austrian Germans, as well as Hungarians). Key authors from this formative period in the historiography of education — around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — include Jan Šafránek (issues of Czech-language primary and secondary education; [64, 65]), Josef Gruber (vocational education; [11]), and Vojtěch Hulík (Czech-language secondary education; [17]).

The approach taken during the pre-WW1 period remained the dominant influence on historians during the inter-war period, which was characterized by attempts to implement practical reforms of an educational system still rooted in its pre-1918 foundations. Important figures in this respect include Otakar Kádner and Otokar Chlup, whose comprehensive histories — still cited today — can be evaluated as the most valuable works on this subject written during the entire period prior to the introduction of Marxist-oriented historiography in 1948. Kádner published a series of four volumes giving a detailed account of the development of the education system in the Bohemian Crown Lands (and later in Czechoslovakia) and selected European countries, focusing primarily on the period from the 18th century to the 1930s; he also published a three-part history of pedagogy, whose second and third volumes dealt with the 18th and 19th centuries respectively [25, 26]. Chlup wrote a synthetic study of the development of pedagogical thought from the 16th century to the 1920s [7].

A key milestone — not only in research of educational history, but in historiography as a whole — came when the Czechoslovak Communist Party seized power in February 1948. As in other areas of Czechoslovak historiography, Marxist doctrine became the dominant methodological approach, combined with a historical-materialist interpretation of the development of society. The four decades spanning from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s were (with just one exception — the brief political thaw in the 1960s) characterized by the complete dominance of this methodology — the sole permissible approach — combined with a rigid adherence to Party doctrines, a restricted repertoire of research topics, markedly limited opportunities for historians to become acquainted with research from other countries, and a critical stance against several "bourgeois" educational historians from the pre-communist era.

Assessing research on educational history published during the period from 1948 to 1989, we can observe a quantitative increase in production, though this research suffered from certain unavoidable limitations — especially of an ideological and methodological nature. Some topics were favoured, playing a central role in research published during this period (the history of universities, especially in the medieval and Early Modern eras, Comenius studies, municipal education prior to 1620 (when the Bohemian Revolt was crushed by Habsburg forces at the Battle of White Mountain), and the transformation of Czechoslovak education after the communists' seizure of power in 1948). However, other topics were treated as taboo, or their importance was downplayed (the development of non-Czechoslovak — i.e. German, Polish, Jewish etc. — education, the formation of the intelligentsia as a social group, the inter-war period and its representatives). As in other areas of historical research, contacts with historians from abroad were mainly restricted to other Eastern bloc states — primarily the USSR, the GDR, Poland and Hungary. Responses to the work of Western historians were minimal, restricted mainly to the brief period of political thaw during the 1960s, when particularly French historiography (of the medieval and Early Modern eras) became a source of inspiration. As a result of this situation, Czechoslovak research of educational history remained essentially rooted in traditional models, as had also been the case before February 1948 — though the methodology was somewhat modified in response to political imperatives. The comprehensive approach to educational history which was developed by Western historiographers from the 1960s onwards (including a boom during the 1970s and 1980s) received only minimal attention in Czechoslovakia, and it remained entirely absent from research of the long 19th century. The research topics associated with the long 19th century avoided the potential political conflicts that were inherent in research focusing on the "reactionary" and "bourgeois" education system of inter-war Czechoslovakia — yet they were still not generally considered to be particularly attractive topics for research. Researchers of educational history had little room for manoeuvre, and this led to a general stagnation in the field — manifested in a restricted and thematically unbalanced range of topics and a failure to keep pace with the trends that were developing in Western European historiography. This situation lay at the root of the challenges that faced Czech researchers of educational history in the years following the collapse of the communist regime in November 1989.

Although this evaluation of the four decades from 1948 to 1989 does not paint a very positive picture of Czech educational historiography during this period, it would nevertheless be wrong to conclude that there were no positive achievements whatsoever. Above all, historiographers laid some foundations — both in terms of institutions and publications — for future research in this field, even though issues related to the long 19th century were initially dealt with only sporadically, and the development of institutions and publications had to wait until 1989 to develop fully after the removal of ideological and methodological restrictions. The key institutional player in this regard was Charles University's Institute of History (established 1959), and key publications were the journals *Pedagogika* (1951), *Historia* Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis (1960) and Dějiny věd a techniky (1968). Leaving aside the large number of descriptive, highly specific and regionally focused texts published by amateur historians during the pre-1989 period, very few researchers focused on the education process from the mid-18th to the early 20th century — especially compared with the large number of historians who studied developments in earlier eras (from the Middle Ages to the 18th century), Comenius studies, or developments in education since 1948. However, despite these limitations, and despite the very small community of historians involved in this field, numerous high-quality studies were published during this period — many of which made a genuine contribution to the development of historical knowledge and have in a sense transcended the limitations of their era (reflected in the fact that they continue to be cited frequently even today). Among the most widely explored topics were the institutional and personal history of Czech national schools (at elementary and secondary levels), the works of major pedagogical figures from the 18th-20th century (e.g. as part of the series Z dějin pedagogiky), the development of literacy, and the development of the educational system (including pedagogical and didactic issues). Authors of note from this period include Jaroslav Kopáč [33], Emanuel Strnad [62; 63], Josef Hanzal [14; 15], Zdenka Veselá [68–70], Josef Cach [3] and the Soviet historian Mikhail Nikolayevich Kuzmin [35]. Knowledge of education during this era was also enriched by comprehensive studies tracing the history of Charles University, the University of Olomouc, and the technical universities in Prague and Brno, as well as several works on vocational institutions which have still not yet been superseded [4; 5; 10; 20; 27; 40; 45].

# Developments in the history of education during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century in post-1989 Czech historiography

November 1989 brought revolutionary changes in the political and social development of Czechoslovakia and its two successor states, as the former Eastern bloc emerged from its

isolation and totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were replaced by democratic systems. These changes were inevitably reflected in Czech historiography, as the new political climate swept away the ideological and political restrictions that had previously constrained researchers — opening up extensive opportunities to apply a wide range of different methodological approaches, to study formerly taboo subjects, to compare the findings of Czech research with findings from other countries, to take account of contemporary trends in international historiography, and to collaborate directly with historians from outside the former Eastern bloc.

It was not until after 1989 that Czech research focusing on the long 19th century began to apply a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the history of education — an approach which had been developed in Western historiography over the previous three decades. This development went hand in hand with a growth of interest in the 19th century among Czech historiographers. It should be noted that research of educational history represented — and continues to represent — a relatively marginal field of interest among scholars specializing in the 19th century. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the volume of research compared with the pre-1989 era — especially since the turn of the new millennium (after a relatively slow start in the 1990s). Within this new body of work, authors focusing on social and cultural history have played a much larger role than their colleagues specializing in pedagogical history. Indeed, interest in pedagogical history as a whole has waned, and those scholars who do specialize in this field have tended to prefer other topics and periods (the transformation of the Czech education system, Comenius studies, education during the inter-war period). The distinction drawn here between these two groups of authors is not merely self-serving. Although the topics and concepts of educational history call out for (and indeed necessitate) coordinated interdisciplinary research, in reality such an approach has hardly been implemented at all in Czech historiography. Communication between experts on social or cultural history and their counterparts specializing in pedagogical history has been minimal, and this has had a detrimental effect. It is only in recent years that projects have been developed which break down the barriers between different disciplines and methodological approaches and help to remove mutual prejudices<sup>2</sup>.

Before turning our attention to the current trends that can be observed in Czech research of educational history in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, it will be useful to present a brief overview of the institutions and publication opportunities available to scholars from 1989 onwards. There is no coordinated research centre in the Czech Republic dedicated specifically to educational history. The institution which comes closest to this area of interest is Charles University's Centre for New History of Schooling and Education (*Centrum pro nové dějiny školství a vzdělanosti*), founded in 2013; however, the Centre's research is considerably broader in scope. Most research on educational history is conducted by individuals working at various universities or non-university institutions (e.g. the Comenius National Pedagogical Museum and Library in Prague, the Comenius Museum in Přerov). Most of these individuals are social and cultural historians, though some are historical demographers and specialists in historical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Examples of these projects from recent years include the conference *Střední školství v českých zemích v 18. až 20. století* — *kontexty, bilance, perspektivy výzkumu* ("Secondary education in the Bohemian Crown Lands from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century — contexts, assessment of the current situation, prospects for future research", Olomouc 2016), *Učitelé na cestách v 18. až 20. století* ("Teachers on the road from the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century", Plzeň — Prague 2017), or the international vocational education projects *The Emergence of the Business School in Europe: Social, Economic and Scientific Context 1818–1939* (Prague 2017) and *Vzdělanec na provincii* ("The intelligentsia in the provinces", organized by the University of Ostrava and Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa; this project has given rise to a four-part series of publications in 2014–2017).

pedagogy<sup>3</sup>. Multi-author publications tend to be the output of teams whose members belong to various institutions; works by members of a single institution are rare. Among the most active institutions in the field in recent years are the Institute of the History and Archive of Charles University, the Charles University Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education at the Technical University of Liberec.

Researchers working in the field of educational history from the 18th–20th century lack a publication platform dedicated specifically to this field. From the 1990s, studies on related topics were occasionally published in the periodical *Studie k sociálním dějinám 19. století* which existed from 1992 to 2004. The Czech Republic lacks an equivalent of periodicals such as *History of Education, Zeitschrift für pädagogische Historiographie or Jahrbuch für Historische Bildungsforschung*. In recent years the journal Marginalia Historica (launched in 2010) has attempted to fill this gap. Important studies of topics related to educational history in the long 19th century occasionally appear in the Charles University periodical *AUC Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* (especially studies on the history of tertiary education); in the pedagogical periodicals *Studia paedagogica, Pedagogika: časopis pro vědy o vzdělávání a výchově and e-Pedagogium; and in major historiographic periodicals* (Český časopis historický, Časopis Matice moravské, Slezský sborník, Historická demografie).

The extent to which Czech scholars researching the educational history of the long 19th century since 1989 have made use of the opportunities outlined above can best be assessed with reference to the topics and methodologies of their publications as well as their participation in international research projects<sup>4</sup>. Judging from the works published by Czech scholars in the past quarter of a century, it is evident that the traditional conception of educational history still prevails, with its strong emphasis on description, its tendency to neglect the interconnections between educational institutions and society as a whole, and its reliance on studies published in the first half of the 20th century, which — though still valuable in terms of their factual content — are now methodologically outdated. However, especially since the turn of the new millennium, this traditional conception has increasingly given way to a more modern approach, inspired by the important role played by education in broader historical developments and informed by the reception of methodological and thematic models from abroad. This has been accompanied by a change in approach to source materials, as researchers have increasingly begun to draw on types of sources that were previously neglected (student registers, school annual reports, materials from municipal and provincial government authorities, etc.)<sup>5</sup>.

It appears that Czech scholars have so far been primarily inspired (both thematically and methodologically) by their German and Austrian counterparts — primarily in connection with studies of the elites of civil society and local government; this is partly due to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A number of scholars from other countries have represented important sources of inspiration for Czech researchers and have greatly supported Czech research in the field of educational history — e.g. Helmut Engelbrecht, Irena Homola, James Albisetti, Charles A. McClelland, Hannelore Burger, Gary B. Cohen and Tara Zahra.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The majority of works on the educational history of the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries published in the Czech Republic since 1989 can be easily found in the regularly updated on-line bibliographical database maintained by the Institute of History at the Czech Academy of Sciences (www.hiu.cas.cz/cs/databaze/bibliograficke-databaze. ep/).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> With regard to source materials, we can mention the project to digitalize the student registers kept by the Czech university in Prague between 1882 and 1945, methodological guidelines on the use of didactic sources (Lenka Hloušková), annual reports issued by secondary schools (Karla Vymětalová, Petr Kadlec), school chronicles (Barbora Machová, Eva Šipöczová) and various other documents compiled by schools, including student registers and other statistical data (Petr Kadlec).

similarities in the social and educational history of these territories during the era under investigation. However, French and Anglo-American historiographers are also increasingly providing a source of inspiration — a trend reflected in the growing number of Czech studies focusing on the social history of childhood, gender history, issues of nationalism, and the processes of social disciplination and professionalization. Inspiration from other countries (such as Hungary and Poland) is more sporadic, and tends to be restricted to relatively specific fields of interest (Jewish education, the formation of the intelligentsia as a social group). Awareness of international developments has been boosted not only by the free availability of the publications of foreign scholars, but also by a dramatic increase in mobility; Czech researchers are now able to cultivate contacts with their colleagues in other countries, either via study visits or via active participation in international conferences and research projects (Jiří Kořalka, Jan Havránek, Karel Rýdl, Tomáš Kasper, Jiří Hnilica etc.). However, the findings of Czech research have not yet been widely reflected in other countries.

Since 1989, traditional topics of research such as individual pedagogical figures (though these topics are addressed in a more modern way) have been joined by new topics which were previously either taboo or were under-researched due to methodological limitations or preferences for different topics. The variety of research topics — and the number of new topics — has grown considerably since the turn of the new millennium (in comparison with the situation in the 1990s).

In general terms, it can be stated that researchers have taken an interest in the entire educational process, though they have focused on different parts of it to varying degrees. Attention has been concentrated primarily on tracing the development of institutional education. Research has also been conducted on topics which were previously neglected almost entirely — such as early childhood and pre-primary institutions (crèches, nursery schools; see [12; 13; 60]). Progress has been made on elementary and secondary education in the period under investigation, with a particular focus on Czech-language education [31; 32; 43; 44; 61; 71]. A modern synthetic work on the university in Prague has also been published; the third volume of this series deals with the period from the beginning of the 19th century onwards [16]. By contrast, other topics have received only minimal attention. These include the history of vocational education institutions, secondary educations with a focus on science and technology (of the *Realschule* or *Realgymnasium* type), technical universities, German and Polish educational institutions, education in minority communities prior to 1918, and non-institutional education (See e.g. [9; 24; 28; 53; 58]).

Research on broader topics has also begun to take account of education-related issues to a greater extent than used to be the case. Examples of such research from the past quarter of a century include popular studies of the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) and topics of culture, childhood and disciplination [37–39; 56]. Researchers' attention during the past 25 years has focused primarily on individual figures — especially teachers, but also on some individuals who were active in the field of pedagogy and who influenced the development of the education system. Numerous high-quality studies by individual authors and research teams have given comprehensive accounts of the lives of these figures, their educational work and their other (public, scholarly) activities (Of the many studies of this topic we can mention e.g. [2; 18; 19; 29; 41; 46; 66; 67]).

One important area of research has been the formation of the intelligentsia as a social group. Before 1989 this topic was considered taboo for ideological reasons, but from the 1990s onwards it became a focus of interest among Czech historiographers. Drawing inspiration from research in other countries, studies of this topic fall into two distinct types.

Initially the focus was on the already existing intelligentsia (Jan Havránek, Jana Machačová, Andrea Pokludová), but in recent years there has been a growing interest in exploring the composition of secondary school and university students — i.e. representatives of the next emerging generation of the intelligentsia — and the circumstances in which they lived (Miroslav Novotný, Milan Myška, Jiří Pešek, Petr Kadlec, Martin Vašíček) (See e.g. [22; 42; 47; 51; 55; 57]).

Around the turn of the new millennium, Czech authors' attention increasingly began to focus on issues of education in certain sections of society — especially those defined on the basis of religion, sex or profession. Valuable studies were published on the education of women [1; 34; 36], the Jewish and Protestant population [8; 23; 49] and the clergy [6], as well as on professions in which education played a key role — e.g. lawyers [59] and clerks [72]. However, Czech historiography has made only minimal progress in integrating educational history with regional history. Besides the above-mentioned four-part series *Vzdělanec na provincii*, focusing on the regions of North Moravia and Silesia, studies have focused on South Bohemia [50] and the Těšín (Teschen/Cieszyn) region [2]. A similar situation applies to individual towns and cities. Although there exist high-quality synthetic accounts of the history of many towns and cities in the Czech Republic, only minimal attention is paid to the development of local educational infrastructure, which tends to be described solely in terms of basic factual data. Only in exceptional cases [54] do such works succeed in moving beyond this restricted scope.

Despite some achievements during the past quarter-century, Czech historiography has achieved only limited progress in addressing issues of educational history in the context of the overall social, economic and cultural development of the Bohemian Crown Lands from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only passing reference has been made to the possibility of applying insights from educational history to research focusing on professionalization (with the exception of academic professions and the teaching profession), secularization, the development of literacy, nationalism, and municipal government. It is therefore no wonder that even after 1989, issues of education have received only scant attention not only in work focusing on the above-listed fields, but also in synthetic studies of the economic and social history of the Bohemian Crown Lands during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Conclusion

Though this paper cannot be exhaustive in scope, it has attempted to present the most comprehensive possible picture of the current situation with regard to Czech research of educational history during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the past quarter of a century, Czech historiography has experienced a huge growth of interest in this historical period, and it is not easy to orient oneself amid the constantly growing number of new published studies. This paper has therefore attempted to trace the main trends in this area and to outline the results achieved by scholars. Due to space constraints, it is not possible to discuss all studies of relevance to the given topic; the paper has therefore restricted its scope to only those authors and works which — for various reasons — can be considered particularly inspirational.

Research into educational history has made undoubted progress since 1989 thanks to the radically changed political and social situation since the so-called Velvet Revolution. Czech researchers were able to draw on numerous older studies of excellent quality, existing publication platforms and a solid institutional base. These circumstances offered foundations on which researchers could build, and indeed they did so. Having said this, it should be noted that more recent research — especially from the turn of the new millennium — has largely relied on newly established periodicals and institutions.

Research conducted during the past quarter-century has grown in volume and reflected inspiration from abroad. Czech scholars have collaborated with their colleagues and institutions in other countries, and these contacts have belatedly helped them to overcome the handicap caused by the highly restricted possibilities that were open to them during the previous four decades; it has also encouraged them to explore new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation. However, despite this evident progress, the traditional conception of educational history has continued to play an important role. Modern conceptions inspired by models from abroad, including new topics and methodologies, have been relatively slow to take root. Scholars specializing in educational history are scattered across several different institutions, and their work is still in the process of finding its own identity.

Given this situation, Czech historians (or their colleagues from other countries specializing in Czech history) currently face a number of challenges. These fall into several categories. There still remains room for improvement in communication and cooperation among Czech historiographers. Although there has been an increase in interdisciplinary projects (especially in the new millennium), here too there is still considerable scope for improvement. Czech historians should strive for the maximum possible degree of integration into European research on educational history — though this does not mean a boundless fascination with foreign models or a blind adherence to foreign methodologies without reflecting the specific characteristics of the Czech reality. There are also major improvements to be made when working with sources; it is essential to change our approach to traditional sources and to place more emphasis on new sources (student registers, institutional annual reports, the activities of education authorities) — and this should be accompanied by efforts to makes these sources more readily accessible (digitalization projects). Finally, it is important to fill certain gaps in Czech historiography — at least those topics to which this paper has drawn attention. A better understanding of social, economic and cultural developments in the Bohemian Crown Lands from the mid-18th century to the early 20th century will be gained not only through case studies and monographs on the topics outlined above, but also through synthetic studies of educational history (such as the work of the Austrian historiographer Helmut Engelbrecht). Only time will tell how successfully Czech scholars will address these challenges — but there is no doubt that such efforts would be beneficial.

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