# Teachers' Beliefs about Socially Disadvantaged Pupils in the Czech Republic

Anna Petr Safrankova[a]*, & Karla Hrbackova[a]

[a] *Department of Pedagogical Science, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín,*
*nam. T.G. Masaryka 5555, 760 01 Zlín, Czech Republic*

## Abstract

One of the significant factors influencing education of socially disadvantaged pupils is the teachers' beliefs about the group of pupils. Teachers' beliefs can influence teachers' judgements and teaching approach. The aim of this study is to determine if there is any relation between teachers' beliefs of socially disadvantaged pupils and selected determinants. In the context of the sociocognitive theories the study presents the results of the survey which point out the impact of the selected determinants to teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils. We suppose that the determinants can significantly affect teachers' beliefs about the group of pupils. The research sample comprised 245 teachers who work at the educational level ISCED 1 and 2 in three regions of the Czech Republic. For the research was used variety of the research methods: questionnaire and Semantic differential (containing 12 scales with bipolar adjectives). Within the survey it was found that teachers' beliefs are influenced by the sociocultural context of the locality where the teachers work and length of practice. It was also found that teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils are not influence by, experience with education of socially disadvantaged pupils and positive perceptions of pupils' diversity. Presented study by using various research methods, tries to point out the significant determinants of education of socially disadvantage pupils. The focus of the research is the teachers' beliefs of socially disadvantaged pupils, which might be according to our findings influenced by the socio-cultural context and length of practice.

*Keywords:* Socially disadvantaged pupils, Teachers' beliefs, Attitudes

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +420 576 037 423
 *E-mail address:* safrankova@fhs.utb.cz

## 1. Theoretical background

At present, the educational system is generally regarded from two fundamental aspects - whether it offers high-quality education and whether this education can be joined with equality (OECD, 2012) (i.e., "whether it is distributed to all according to their possibilities and abilities "(Greger In Matějů et. al., 2006, p. 21)). In this context, we often talk about the issue of the education of socially disadvantaged pupils. This area is at the center of a series of pedagogical and sociological research inquiries both in the Czech Republic (e.g.. Knausová, 2006; Večerník, 1998; Matějů & Straková, 2006; Katrňák, 2004; Tuček, 2003; Simonová, 2008, 2011 etc.) and abroad (e.g. Havighurts, 1965; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1957; Coleman, 1966; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1994; Clegg & Ginsborg, 2006, etc.). Given the above, it is clear that the topic of the education of socially disadvantaged pupils is not entirely a new one. The impact of social and economic determinants on the education of pupils was attached varying degrees of importance and took on different specifics in different times and in different societies. The education of this specific group of pupils can be examined from a number of aspects, however, the present study focuses on the sociocognitive theory perspective, emphasizing the importance of the social and cultural dimensions (in the context of the present study - teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils) in the learning process. Sociocognitive theories emphasize the "various aspects of sociocultural transactions between man and his environment." (Bertrand, 1998, p. 117) The focus of these theories are therefore social relations in the school environment and inside the class, including the influence of peers and intervening parties in the construction of pedagogical situations. (Bertrand, 1998) We assume that in addition to family factors (which have a significant impact on the emergence of a social disadvantage in the context of school education) it is the school environment and the personality of the teacher/teachers which may be an important determinant influencing the successful education of socially disadvantaged pupils. (Matuška In Lechta et. al. 2010)

We start with the assumption that the school environment is an important habitat in which the socialization process follows up on the action of primary socialization (realized primarily within the family environment). The school environment, in terms of the education of the above mentioned specific group of pupils, can be perceived in the intersections of the model, affecting the educational process as the relationship between the three fundamental elements (pupil - teacher - curriculum). In this model, in relation to the present study, we primarily accentuate the role of teachers and teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils as an important determinant of the education of this group of pupils. It is precisely the teacher's beliefs about this group of pupils that seems to have a strong influence on their action in the classroom. (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Calderhead, 1996)

This study thus focuses on the partial specifics of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils and selected determinants that may influence this perception. In the context of this study, we define teachers' beliefs as a complex of many elements, creating an image of a given group, where we primarily focus on particular elements of teachers' attitudes toward socially disadvantaged pupils and their education. In agreement with Pelikán and Helus (1984), we believe that the education of pupils can be seen through the prism of their teachers and it is this perception, including the teachers' attitudes toward socially disadvantaged pupils, that also indirectly affects the overall atmosphere in the classroom as well as additionally reflecting back both on the individual pupils and on the interaction of teachers with the class. (Šafránková & Kocourková, 2011)

### 1.1. Definition of the group of socially disadvantaged pupils

Precisely defining the group of socially disadvantaged pupils is not easy, not only because of the individual perception of the semantics of the term "socially disadvantaged pupil", but also because it is a very diverse group of pupils. (Němec, 2012)

For further specifying the concept of "social disadvantage", it is necessary to specify the particular terms of which it is composed.

"Disadvantage" can be seen as a relative term, which is defined in relation to other individuals. However, this fact alone does not necessarily mean that although there are differences between people, someone must necessarily be disadvantaged. The focus of the definition of "disadvantage" is therefore a certain value judgment. (OECD, 1998) Similarly, a disadvantage can be seen as a situation when a certain individual (or group) is not perceived equally in

relation to other members of the given society due to their nature and differences. (Koldinská, 2010) The term "disadvantaged" from the lexical point of view is an adjective, which in itself can evoke that it is a characteristic of a certain quality of an individual or group. In general a "disadvantage" can be perceived as a condition that prevents an individual (or group) from adequately fulfilling their potential in terms of the denial of access to certain resources and mechanisms compared with other individuals. Overcoming a "disadvantage" in this context means the elimination or mitigation of the given "obstacle". (Mayer, 2003)

The term "social" (based on the lat. socialis) can be defined by a number of definitions. In general, it is the designation of phenomena that are linked to the interaction between individuals and their work together, to the processes of association and the resulting way of life and forms of organization. (Maříková & Petrusek 1996) If we define the term "social" in the narrow sense of the word, it can be characterized in relation to a certain individual, their needs, problems and their specific interaction with other people, but also the environment in which it occurs. (Maříková & Petrusek, 1996) (cf. Kraus, 2008; Žižková, 1997)

It is therefore obvious that the term "social disadvantage" can be defined in many ways (Clegg & Ginsborg, 2006). For the purposes of this study (or the research that this study presents) the social disadvantage of a pupil is more narrowly construed when it comes to an individual coming from a family environment, which thanks to its socioeconomic and cultural conditions insufficiently encourages or insufficiently allows, or completely disallows the mental, emotional and volitional characteristics of the child and which is socio-economically and culturally different from the environment in which pupils coming from the majority population grow up in, and this difference significantly impedes their full-fledged participation in society and from fully developing their educational potential. (Šafránková & Kocourková, 2013)

The environment is therefore an important category and a determinant of the creation of a social disadvantage, but also (meant within the school environment) an important variable that can serve as a catalyst or an inhibitor of the social disadvantage of pupils. In this sense, the school environment (with all the characteristics and specifications) can help individuals overcome their social disadvantage, but on the contrary may also cause a worsening of this disadvantage.

### 1.2. Teachers´ beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils

Based on a number of domestic and international research inquiries it has been shown that in addition to the family variable, another important determinant influencing student learning and learning outcomes, the teacher's influence and their teaching is the teacher's belief about pupils and working with children. (Průcha, Walterová & Mareš, 2009) "The teacher helps to create the educational environment, the class climate, organizes and coordinates the activities of pupils, conducts and evaluates the learning process and its results" (Průcha, Walterová & Mareš, 2009) It is therefore logical that at present in the conceptual and research field there is a growing trend of the accentuation of discussions in the field of the teaching profession as one of the main factors that can be influenced. (Starý, Dvořák, Greger & Duschinská, 2012)

In the context of the presented study we focus on the teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils, as it is the beliefs about this group of pupils that can have a significant impact on the teacher's work with this group. (Borko & Putnam, 1996). In this context, beliefs can be seen as an "individual's judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares, 1992, p. 316), but also "as a set of conceptual representations which store general knowledge of objects, people and events, and their characteristic relationships "(Herman van Braak & Van Keer, 2008, p. 128). Bandura (1997) similarly argues that beliefs guide our goals, emotions, decision, actions, and reactions. Generally it can be stated that "teachers' beliefs can facilitate or hinder practice by serving to filter, frame, and guide experience, decisions, and actions. (Fives & Buehl In Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 1) Similarly, in the Czech educational environment, teachers' beliefs can be defined as a complex of professional ideas, attitudes, expectations, desires and prejudices that form the basis for teacher behavior and for the perception and realization of educational processes. A teacher's pedagogical thinking is composed of features that are partially common to the entire professional group and are partially individual, as well as being conscious, but also partly unconscious, based on cognitive, but also emotional components. (Průcha, 2002) Content wise, this phenomenon is not only focused on the educational process itself, but also on the wider aspects of the educational reality i.e. on their own teaching profession and their role in it, as

well as on pupils and groups of pupils, colleagues, and superiors. (Průcha, 2002)

Helus and Pelikán (1984) state that the teacher's concept of a group of pupils is not based solely upon who the pupils really are and what performance they achieve, but is a construct, which is composed of a number of elements (they talk about confrontational factors i.e. all intervening factors, that arise on the basis of comparison, namely either based on experience or on the basis of expectations and other factors associated with common perception and irrational factors i.e. for example sympathy, antipathy etc., including for example, what type of impression the teacher has about the pupils, information about them, their expectations and assumptions with which they approach the pupils). (Helus, 2001)

Generally, we can say that teachers' beliefs about pupils (in our case socially disadvantaged pupils) is a complex of many elements forming an image of the given group. The intentions of this study focus on the partial aspects of teachers' beliefs or the partial elements of the attitudes of teachers towards socially disadvantaged pupils and their education. Pelikán and Helus (In Šafránková & Kocourková, 2013) found that it is teachers' beliefs about a group of pupils, including their attitudes, that indirectly affect the overall atmosphere in the classroom, and reflect back on both the individual pupils and the interaction of the teachers with the given class. Pelikán and Helus (In Šafránková & Kocourková, 2013), who studied preferential teachers' attitudes, found that the predominant focus of the teacher on certain pupils in the class who thereby become more the subject of the teacher's interest than others (positive or negative) is also reflected in the performance of pupils. A specific student is always in the consciousness (or subconsciousness) of the teacher in their conduct and behavior and on the one hand is confronted with the idea that the teacher subjectively creates about the ideal pupil, and on the other hand with fellow classmates. Pupils with a higher index of adaptability, pupils temperamentally calmer, quieter, more balanced, not excessive with their activity and temperament had a better evaluation. Based on this finding, we believe that we can assume that pupils who in some way fall outside the "average" will on the contrary be under evaluated. Socially disadvantaged pupils may be included among such pupils. (Šafránková & Kocourková, 2011)

## 2. Research methodology

Given the multifactorial nature and often latent definition of this phenomenon, we focus mainly on teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils and their education (i.e. or on partial aspects of teachers' attitudes towards a particular group of pupils) within the research using specific methods. It is undisputed that this phenomenon, given the sheer difficulty of defining this large group of pupils and due to variability in approaches to socially disadvantaged pupils, is often very difficult to grasp. However, in a reflection of the above theoretical basis, we believe that it is teachers' attitudes toward socially disadvantaged pupils that form part of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils and can significantly affect the education of this specific group of students.

The aim of the descriptive - relational research inquiry was to find out how the selected research sample of teachers working on the educational levels ISCED 1 and 2 perceive socially disadvantaged pupils (partial aspects of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils) and their education and verify some of the relationships related to selected determinants and the perception of socially disadvantaged pupils and their education (partial aspects of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils). In this context, we are interested in whether there are differences in the perception of socially disadvantaged pupils (and their education) among teachers according to the region in which they work, the length of their practice, depending on whether or not they have experience in the education of this specific group of students and a positive/negative perception of pupil diversity.

The research group is teachers from selected regions (Central Bohemia, Vysočina Region, Moravian-Silesian Region) working during the implementation of the research inquiry (May-July 2014), according to the International standard classification of education levels ISCED 1 and ISCED 2. Due to the nature of the research project and the multidimensional nature of a social disadvantage (determining environment) the selection of the regions was intentional, and was carried out on the basis of a socio-demographic analysis. (SocioFactor s.r.o., 2013, p. 429) On the basis of this analysis, three regions were selected that have the smallest (Vysočina Region), average (Central Bohemian Region) and the largest (Moravian-Silesian region) level of risk to children. The total research sample (returned questionnaires) consisted of 245 respondents, of which 204 (83.27%) of the respondents were female and 41 (i.e. 16.73%) of the respondents were male. From our point of view, an inalienable characteristic of the

respondents in relation to their attitudes and opinions on the group of socially disadvantaged pupils, is their length of teaching experience. If we look at the given region through the lens of the development of the professional career of the teaching profession, we can say that almost 49% of respondents have teaching experience of 21 or more years and 51% of respondents consist of individuals with less than 20 years of experience (including). In terms of experience with the teaching of socially disadvantaged students 72% of respondents (n = 177) stated that they had experience in the past 5 years with the education of this group of students, the others i.e. 23% of respondents (n = 68) did not have this experience for the period. The age range of the respondents ranged from less than 25 years (2%) to more than 60 years (6%). In general it can be stated that 71% of the respondents to the research inquiry were older than 40 years and only 11% are represented by respondents up to 30 years old.

### 2.1 *Research methods*

For the purposes of the present research the questionnaire method and the semantic differential were used. The semantic differential is a specific method that makes it possible to tap into the individual meaning of the terms in the conception of the respondents. (Pelikán, 2011) Based on many analyzes this method was developed by Osgood and his associates (Succi, Tannenbaum), who proceeded from the assumption that for the individual, a specific object hides both the denotative significance and connotative meanings. (Osgood et al., 1975) Using this method can thus determine the individual meanings of key terms and their semantic proximity. (Osgood et al., 1975)

Although the Semantic differential is referred to by some authors as a method of measuring the attitudes of individuals to a given term, we are inclined to agree with the authors, that proceed from the fact that we cannot safely measure the conative component of attitude through this method, therefore we talk more about partial components of attitudes, or about the measurement of meaning. (comp. e.g. Nakonečný 1997, p. 100, Bagozzi 1978, 1981).

The principle of this method is similar to that of the rating methods. The respondents recorded their opinions on the assessed terms in seven-point scales, which are made up of contradictory adjectives. (Chráska, 2007, p. 221) For our research the adjectives were chosen intentionally on the basis of previous research. (Šafránková, Kocourková, 2013) The adjectives are: *pleasant – unpleasant; clean - dirty; undemanding – demanding; beautiful – ugly; bright – dark; easy – difficult; good – bad; strict – mild; problematic – unproblematic; strong –weak; heavy – light; sour – sweet.*

Conceptual indicators related to the education of socially disadvantaged pupils were determined in line with the objective of the research. It was these conceptual indicators: socially disadvantaged pupil, pupil from a socio-economically disadvantaged background, pupil from a culturally different background, pupil living in the conditions of material poverty, pupil with special educational needs, inclusion, segregation, our school and self.

The data was analyzed by a factor analysis using the principal component method and rotated solutions with the varimax condition (normalized). Three factors are usually monitored for each term - *the evaluation factor, the potency factor and the activity factor*, which form a three-dimensional semantic space. (Chráska, 2007, p. 221) The evaluation factor (in accordance with Osgood et al., 1975 and Chráska, 2007) expresses to what extent the assessed term is perceived as "good" or "bad". In the framework of the explorative analysis (as stated by Chráska, 2007), the activity factor is a considerably subtle construct with which a misinterpretation is possible. We therefore used the energy dimension which in this reflects to what extent the term is linked for respondents to "effort", difficulties, changes or activity. (Chráska, 2007)

Using the factor analysis of the individual scales, it was found that: 1) the "evaluation" factor is measured by the following scales: *pleasant - unpleasant, clean - dirty, beautiful - ugly, bright - dark, good - bad, sweet - sour*, 2) the "energy" factor is measured by the following scales: *demanding - undemanding, easy - difficult, strict - mild, problematic - unproblematic, strong- weak, heavy - light.*

The questionnaire looked into the basic demographic and the personal characteristics of respondents and along with the semantic differential was available in electronic form on the set up web pages and its link was sent to primary school teachers from the mentioned regions (in the event that the primary schools had their e-mail address

listed on their website) and at the same time the principals of these schools were sent a request and an appeal to forward the link to the survey to all teachers of the school.

Descriptive characteristics, the Kruskal - Wallis test and the Mann–Whitney U test were used during data analysis. The correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$.

## 3. Results and interpretation

Based on the above factor analysis, the arithmetic averages of all conceptual indicators were further calculated for all respondents (n = 245). The following graph (No. 1) presents the evaluation of all conceptual indicators of the respondents.
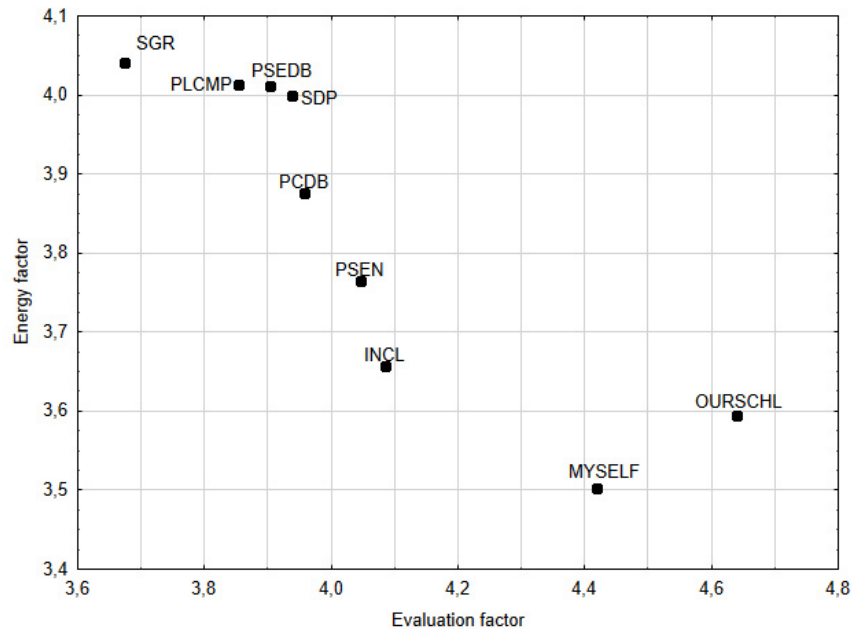


Legend: SDP - socially disadvantaged pupils; PSEDB - pupil from a socio-economically disadvantaged family background; PCDB - pupil from a culturally different background; PLCMP - pupil living in conditions of material poverty; PSEN - pupil with special educational needs; SGR – segregation; INCL – inclusion; OURSCHL – our school

Graph 1. Semantic space of the selected indicators

The graph (No. 1) shows that the highest value of the "energy" factor was gained by the term "segragation" (4.0407), which the respondents associated with greater "effort" and expending more energy. Which itself is based on the very nature of the given term. Conversely, in terms of the perception of the term along the lines of "good" and "bad" ("evaluation" factor 3.6748) this term, compared with the above concepts, is perceived as rather negative.
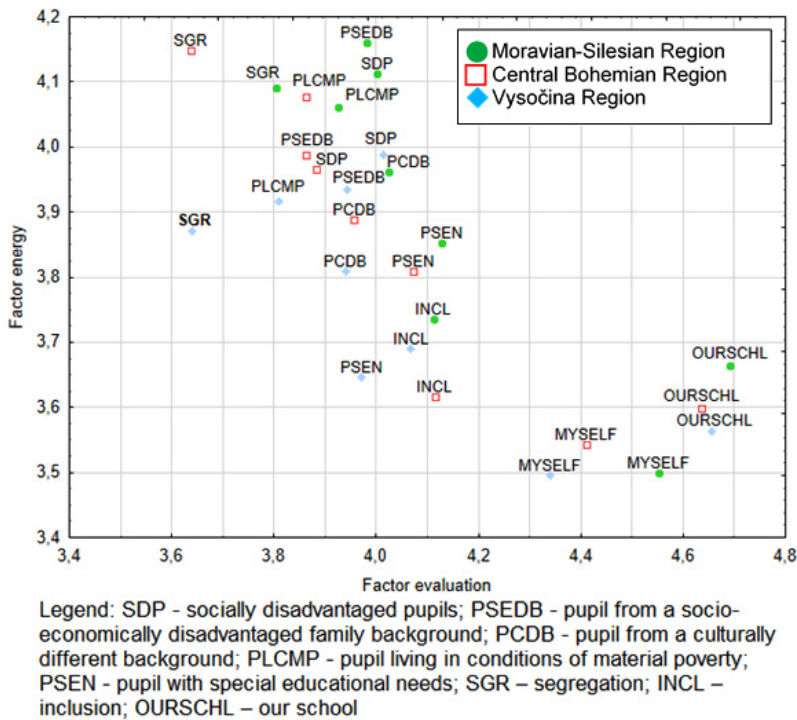
The graph also shows that the concepts "pupil living in condition of material poverty", "pupil from a socioeconomically disadvantaged family background" and "socially disadvantaged pupils" are perceived by teachers as being similar (in terms of the "energy" factor and "evaluation" factor). This fact may be due to the very definition of social disadvantage, which includes all these concepts. The term "pupils from culturally different backgrounds" is perceived similarly, although with lower "energy" factor levels (3.8753). Based on the obtained data, the term "pupils with special educational need" is perceived more positively by respondents compared to the above concepts in terms of the "evaluation" factor and, the same as with the "energy" factor, a different assessment can be recorded, where it is associated with 'less' effort, difficulty and activity by respondents. The graph (No. 1) shows a different perception (in terms of the "energy" factor and the "evaluation" factor) of the terms "inclusion" and "segregation",

among which the above mentioned terms related to different subcategories of social disadvantage are found and also with the term "pupil with special educational needs". The graph (No. 1) also presents the evaluation of the terms "myself" and "our school", where it is evident that the smallest value in the "energy" factor was gained by the concept "myself" and the highest value in the "evaluation" factor "our school".

Furthermore, based on the aims of the research, the relationship between the perception of the individual conceptual indicators and sociocultural characteristics was investigated (the given environment in which the respondent works). We proceeded from the research question whether there are statistically significant differences between understanding the selected conceptual indicators relating to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education among respondents in the Central Bohemian Region, Vysočina Region and the Moravian-Silesian Region.

Due to the fact that it involved three regions, the Kruskal - Wallis test was used for statistical verification, where there was a statistically significant difference between the perception of the conceptual indicator "segragation" in the "energy" factor (p = 0.0707). In this sense, the biggest difference statistically was the evaluation of the given concept of the "energy" factor between the Vysočina region and other regions - The Central Bohemian Region and the Moravian-Silesian Region.

The perception of the conceptual indicators related to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education can be represented in the following graph.



Legend: SDP - socially disadvantaged pupils; PSEDB - pupil from a socio-economically disadvantaged family background; PCDB - pupil from a culturally different background; PLCMP - pupil living in conditions of material poverty; PSEN - pupil with special educational needs; SGR – segregation; INCL – inclusion; OURSCHL – our school

Graph 2. Differences between regions in the perception of conceptual indicators

Based on the above data it is evident that significant differences in the perception of the individual indicators are mainly in the term "segragation". Respondents from the Vysočina Region perceive this term differently in the "energy" factor (3.869) when compared with the Central Bohemian and Moravian-Silesian Region they perceived it with less effort and expending much "less" exertion. This could result from the nature of the examined issue, which is influenced by the sociocultural and economic characteristics of the given area. In the above-mentioned socio-demographic analysis (SocioFactor s.r.o., 2013, p. 429) the Vysočina Region showed the lowest degree of risk within the dimensions: demographic and social environment; economic activity, unemployment, recipients of benefits; incompleteness and non-functioning families and its threats.

Due to the fact that teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils (or, in the context of the present study, its partial aspects of attitudes of teachers to socially disadvantaged pupils) are not entirely static, but is a construct that is composed of a variety of elements that are formed based on a comparison of experiences and expectations (Pelikán, 1995), the assumption that the previous experience of teachers with the education of socially disadvantaged pupils has an influence on the perception of selected conceptual indicators was verified. So we proceeded from the assumption that there are statistically significant differences between the conceptual understanding of selected indicators relating to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education among respondents who already have experience with the education of socially disadvantaged pupils and who do not have this experience. We measured this relationship using the U-Mann Whitney test at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. Using this method, there was no statistically significant difference found between the perception of conceptual indicators and the previous experience of teachers with the education of socially disadvantaged pupils.

Given that the examined term (partial elements of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils) is not static for the whole teaching practice, we investigated whether there is a difference in the perception of conceptual indicators and the length of service of teachers using the Kruskal - Wallis test. A difference in the perception of the individual conceptual indicators was ascertained only among teachers who have 1-5 years experience and teachers who have more than 21 years of experience ($p = 0.0191$), namely in the conceptual indicator "pupil from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds" (in the "evaluation" factor). Teachers with 1-5 years of experience perceive the conceptual indicator "pupil from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds" negatively compared to teachers with experience of 21 and more years. Due to the demanding definition of the group of socially disadvantaged pupils, this concept is often defined based on the low socio-economic status of the family (SES), in which the child grows up. Conger and Dogan (2007) reports that the SES of a family positively correlates with parental investment in the children's future. In this wording, the assumption that families with a higher SES invest more time, finances and energy into the development of their children and may put greater demands on their academic achievement could be considered. Based on the above and based on the findings of our investigation, we can assume that teachers who come from undergraduate training and have less experience (1-5 years) evaluate the term "pupil from soci-economically disadvantaged background" negatively precisely because with this group of students it is necessary to work harder, work with families and find optimal and efficient methods of cooperation. On the contrary, we believe that teachers with many years of experience (resp. 21 and more years) have already acquired these methods and strategies and therefore evaluate the term substantially more positively.

The education of socially disadvantaged pupils is often associated with the concept of inclusive education, within which there is a valuing of diversity and the differences of students as well as the evaluation of these characteristics in the educational process, so that there is a full-fledged development of the potential of all and in the words of Johnson and Johnson (1999) the internalization of pluralistic and democratic values, including a commitment to the equality of all persons and granting everyone the right to liberty and happiness. In this context, it was investigated whether the teacher's positive understanding of pupil diversity affects their perception of selected conceptual indicators related to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education. On the basis of the statistical validation of the given assumption it was discovered (significance level $p < 0.01$) there is no statistically significant difference between these variables.

Based on the above facts and given the selected determinants, it was found that the perception of conceptual indicators is most influenced by the sociocultural environment in which the respondent works and it was furthermore discovered that the length of teaching experience can have a significant impact on the perception of socially disadvantaged pupils.

## 4. Summary

The research focused on verifying the relationships between the perception of the selected indicators and selected variables. In this sense, we proceeded from the assumption that teachers 'attitudes as a partial component of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils are multidimensional constructs, which are influenced by many factors and may directly or indirectly influence the education of this specific group of pupils. Given the social context of the whole issue, we examined whether there is a difference between the perception of selected conceptual indicators among teachers in individual regions. Using statistical methods a statistically significant difference was found between respondents in the Vysočina Region and the Central Bohemian Region and the Moravian-Silesian Region

in the perception of the conceptual indicator "segregation" (the "energy" factor). Respondents in the Vysočina Region associate this concept with less effort and expending much "less" exertion. This could result from the nature of the examined issue, which is influenced by the sociocultural and economic characteristics of the given area. In the above-mentioned socio-demographic analysis (SocioFactor s.r.o., 2013, p. 429) the Vysočina Region showed the lowest degree of risk within the dimensions: demographic and social environment; economic activity, unemployment, recipients of benefits; incompleteness and non-functioning families and its threats. As part of the verification of the assumption, focusing on the differences between the understanding of the selected conceptual indicators relating to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education according to the experiences of respondents with the education of this group of pupils, no statistically significant difference was proven. This fact was partly surprising from our point of view given the fact that attitudes are partially gained through personal or indirect experiences with objects. (Atkinson, 1995) Similarly, the hypothesis that focused on whether teachers evaluating pupil diversity as a factor that can enrich individuals, perceive selected conceptual indicators related to socially disadvantaged pupils and their education differently was not confirmed. (comp. e.g. Potměšil In Havel & Filová, 2010) Finally, it was found that teachers with less teaching experience (resp. 1-5 years), thus novice teachers have a different perception than 'professional' teachers (resp. as part of our research with up to 21 or more years of experience) the conceptual indicator "pupil from socioeconomically disadvantaged background". In this case, we can assume that the transition between the stage of the preparation for the teaching profession and its actual performance can be a highly difficult experience (comp. e.g. Veenman, 1984; Průcha 2002 et al.), in which it is required to deal with a whole number of facts. Therefore, we believe that the just referred to term may be implicitly associated by beginning teachers with more effort and the expending of more strain than with 'professional' teachers.

Based on the above findings of the research, it can be concluded that the partial elements of teachers' beliefs about socially disadvantaged pupils and their education are varied, but even so it is still possible to find common factors that point to the need for understanding the given issue in the context of the socioeconomic and cultural specifics of the social environment.

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