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**Educational Ideas of Hungarian Children's Literature  
during the Enlightenment Era**

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## **Introduction**

Childhood is a special phase of human life when an individual gains their first experiences about the world, when the first impressions that might influence their entire life are formed. One characteristic of childhood is that it's finite in time, but its exact duration differs from era to era, and culture to culture. For a long time, childhood wasn't given special attention, its existence was taken for granted. A starting point for historical childhood research was provided by Philippe Ariès' 1960 work titled *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* and the subsequent debates about it. The aim of this thesis is to closely examine how the upbringing of children was conceived at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, what traits, tasks, and expectations were attributed to them. In this study, we analyze literary and textbook texts used in that era.

## **The theoretical background of the thesis, literature embedding**

The multifaceted connections make it possible to study childhood from various perspectives. Different scientific fields approach the understanding of this topic using their unique methodologies. In the second half of the 20th century, in the United States and Western Europe, new socio-historical trends like mentality history, microhistory, and childhood and family history emerged. In Hungary, from the 1990s, there was a shift towards historical, social, cultural, and educational contextual treatment of the child.

The German book series titled *Kinder, Kindheiten und Kindheitsforschung* relates to research on child and childhood history, which, in addition to enhancing knowledge on the subject, also contrasts various views. The book series *Presse und Geschichte* includes several volumes that deal with Hungarian, Austrian, and German cultural relations, including, among others, an examination of youth literature from the Josephinian era (Seibert, 2002). In 2021, the *History of Education & Children's Literature* journal published a thematic issue on transnational and transcultural educational models from Central and South Europe over the past two centuries, as well as an issue on the students of the Habsburg Monarchy that also covers Hungary. The Canadian *Eighteenth-Century Fiction (ECF)* publishes studies and reviews related to European literature and culture from the period between 1660 and 1830. The *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies (JECS)*, founded in 1972, accepts studies on a variety of topics related to the 18th century and in 2006, dedicated a special issue to the culture of childhood (*The Cultures of Childhood*).

Regarding modern education and children's literature research in foreign literature, the following are considered particularly noteworthy: Barbara Whitehead studied the history of European girl education between 1500 and 1800 (1999). Ewers and Seibert (1997) covered Austrian children's and youth literature from 1800 to the present. Johanna Hopfner researched the history of German female education in the early 19th century (Hopfner, 1990). Ingrid Tomkowiak explored the narrative content of German-language school textbooks from 1770 to 1920 (Tomkowiak, 1993). Martina Winkler provided an overview of the historical examination of childhood in her book (2017). Linda Pollock studied the daily dynamics of patriarchal sibling relationships (Pollock, 1998; cited by: Erdélyi, 2019, p. 157).

Regarding Hungarian literature, regular research on the history of childhood began in the 1990s. Éva Szabolcs (1999) demonstrated a potential approach to studying the history of childhood, relying on the press as a source. She analyzed selected periodicals from the era of dualism using content analysis. Éva Szabolcs (2011) also traced the construction process of the school child based on the analysis of contemporary pedagogical professional press from 1868, the period following the introduction of compulsory schooling, examining the subsequent four decades.

From the eighties, childhood was examined under new interpretive frameworks. A primary goal of the more recent sociology-driven studies was to illustrate the socialization process through which a child became a participant in society. Erzsébet Golnhofer and Éva Szabolcs (2005) presented the main trends of this new type of sociology-based childhood research in their book. Béla Pukánszky, in his monograph titled *The Child in 19th Century Hungarian Educational Handbooks* (2005), compared the human ideal and childhood image of the era with the goals of education and the prevailing child concept based on the leading educational handbooks and textbooks.

Gabriella Baska, Judit Hegedűs and Attila Nóbik wrote about the thematic and methodological changes and enrichments in Hungarian educational history research over the last two decades in their book (2013). New research areas emerged within educational history, including the history of childhood, historical educational sociology, research on life reform movements, the history of educational science, and women's history. The methodology also enriched with the appearance of content analysis and iconographic analysis.

Katalin Kéri processed the modern education and cultural history of Hungarian girls (2018). Her work, primarily focusing on the education of girls from middle and upper social strata, continuously compared with European educational efforts. Katalin Fehér (1999) examined the early 19th-century press from an educational science perspective, presenting the educational ideals of the Enlightenment. She used press products as previously undiscovered source material in her

monograph. In her later work, Katalin Fehér discussed the education of the Enlightenment era from the perspective of the contemporary intellectual class (Fehér, 2017).

Several domestic journals, such as *História*, *Műhely*, *Iskolakultúra*, and *Gyermeknevelés*, dedicated thematic issues to childhood. *História* revolved around the child as an individual, whom they apostrophized as the “pledge of the future”, addressing new topics and viewpoints, from which further social and cultural historical research can be conducted. Ferenc Glatz also raised the necessity of an “individual historical perspective” (Glatz, 1997, p. 4).

One thematic issue of the *Műhely* cultural journal from 1999 presented a colorful palette of topics about childhood. In 2002, *Iskolakultúra* published the lectures from the child history symposiums of the I. National Pedagogical Conference, and *Gyermeknevelés* in 2017 compiled a thematic issue titled *Childhood History and Iconography*.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

The research revolved around two main questions:

To what extent do books written for children reflect the perception of children during the period under study?

In what ways and for what reasons did families try to instill socially accepted behavior in children?

For the first question, we partly analyze the characteristics of child characters in fictitious stories from various perspectives, and with the second, we look at the role of the family in the educational process. At the start of the research, we assumed that literary texts could be examined in the context of the history of education. According to Hans-Heino Ewers, children's literature reflects societal changes and the expectations and norms set for children. Thus, studying children's literary works can be interesting not only for literary historians but also for representatives of other sciences. This interdisciplinary paper relates to research in educational history, childhood history, and cultural history.

During the period under study, several parallel processes took place that promoted the spread of books for children and the formation of their content. Secularization processes of the Enlightenment had various impacts: the state took over the operation of schools from the church. The emerging bourgeoisie had different educational needs than what was previously available in schools. The development of printing allowed for the mass and cheaper publication of books, thus

reaching a wider readership. Topics of books also evolved, with secular subjects beginning to displace religious content.

The importance of children was re-evaluated both by the state and families, with both paying more attention to children's education and training. Both the state and the middle class approached the upbringing of children with an emphasis on utility. The state desired loyal, diligent, and reliable subjects, while the middle class valued practical knowledge. The emerging children's book market was also evaluated for its usefulness.

The *I. Ratio Educationis* emphasized the importance of moral education alongside physical and intellectual education. It highlighted the need for citizens to be healthy, educated, and moral for the prosperity of the state. The norms and expectations formulated by the state were incorporated into books, covering areas such as health and coexistence requirements. The belief in reason of the Enlightenment is reflected here, suggesting that moral foundations can be conveyed and taught rationally.

As a result of the *I. Ratio Educationis*, new types of primer and reading books were written. These textbooks, beyond teaching and practicing reading, also played a role in socialization, as their characters provided guidance to readers through their actions, behaviors, and traits. The moral stories for children clearly defined the expectations associated with right and wrong behavior, ultimately providing insight into the contemporary perception of children.

### **The framework, sources, and venues of the research**

Katalin Fehér categorized books for children and young readers from the last third of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th century into three main topics: works supporting religious education, works supporting moral education, and books providing scientific knowledge not intended for school use (Fehér, 2000). Among the different groups, works related to moral education made up the largest part of children's reading materials.

At the start of the research, we identified publication types containing moralizing stories for children. We found that, in addition to children's books, school and home use reader books, textbooks, and other publications, such as periodicals, also contain readings in the specified category. Preliminary research suggested that the textual corpus of books intended for school and home use showed great similarity, so it seemed appropriate to include each type of book in the research. Examining both types of books was justified because until 1848, books and reading materials for school or private use couldn't be distinguished from "literary" works in the strict sense

(Szondy, 1932, p. 401). The focus of the study was on moralizing works depicting children in their everyday environments, either at home or in school. Primary sources for the research were selected pieces of textbooks and non-textbook readings for children from the period between 1777 and 1830.

Children's literary works, according to Katalin Fehér's classification, only appeared on the Hungarian book market in the first decade of the 19th century. For the last third of the 18th century, we mainly had textbooks and translations at our disposal. When selecting samples, we focused on works prepared for the 6-10 age group or those attending primary education. Determining the age group was essential to ensure that both textbooks and non-textbook works prepared for approximately the same age group were included in the study.

When working on the selection of our sample, for the non-textbook works, we relied on Katalin Pócsi's compilation about moral literature in Hungary (Pócsi, 2012) and the bibliographic part of Pál Drescher's book on children's literature (Drescher, 1934). For textbooks, we used Géza Petrik's bibliography (Petrik, 1888–1892).

The life of the authors of the works discussed in this paper, their pedagogical – and in some cases literary – work, was presented based on contemporary press releases and the lexicon *Hungarian Writers' Lives and Works* by József Szinnyei (Szinnyei, 1891–1914), as well as other biographical lexicons and monographs. We nuanced the presentation of the era by utilizing announcements and reviews published in contemporary journals and periodicals.

For the exploration of primary sources, the research was conducted in the National Széchényi Library, the National Pedagogical Library, and the Budapest Collection of the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library. We carried out the research of the literature in the previously mentioned libraries, as well as in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the University Library. We also searched for foreign literature in the ERIC and JSTOR databases. For reviewing contemporary periodicals, apart from original library copies, we also utilized the Arcanum Digital Science Library, which we also used to explore further secondary sources. We also used the Hungaricana database for literature search, and the digitalized school reports found therein provided an opportunity to review some school library stocks.

## **Research methods and strategy of the thesis**

The study relates to historical educational research, which primarily uses traditional methods in the history of education to analyze selected works of children's literature. However, for the formulation of research questions, we utilized the Glaser-type of the Grounded Theory method.

Qualitative methods have been increasingly adopted in the last two decades of the 20th century, not only in foreign but also in domestic educational historical research. The creation of the Grounded Theory (GT) is attributed to Glaser and Strauss, who published their groundbreaking book on qualitative research methods in 1967 (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). With their work, they “established the basis for systematic qualitative data analysis” (Mitev, 2015, p. 95).

GT is “not a data collection strategy, but a data analysis strategy” (Mitev, 2015, p. 99). Grounded Theory is a methodology; within qualitative research, it is not a specific procedure with precise steps to follow in order to evaluate data, like the qualitative content analysis.

“The fundamental role of grounded theory is to create a new theory that serves as an explanation for the relationships of individual or collective experiences” (Mitev, 2015, p. 95). GT represents a specific approach to data and a systematic procedure for evaluating qualitative data in order to describe a lesser-known research area or to formulate a theory or model. Thus, Grounded Theory is a kind of guide to developing a theoretical model.

One major novelty of the grounded theory was that it broke away from the research concept which insisted that data collection and data analysis processes should be strictly separated (Charmaz, 2003, cited by: Mitev, 2012). Data collection and its interpretation can occur simultaneously, and with the emergence of new data or ideas, the process can be repeated several times. The theory itself evolves from data analysis and evaluation, meaning that while using Grounded Theory, the researcher attempts to create a new theory by collecting and analyzing data.

Glaser believed that “the research problem should become concrete during the research process” (Mitev, 2015, p. 96). In this spirit, he rejected prior knowledge, wanting all research-related questions to form from the collected data and its analysis. For the same reason, he rejected deductive logic. Glaser felt that “the purpose of grounded theory is the creation of theory, not its validation” (Charmaz, 2003, cited by: Mitev, 2015, p. 96).

Theory formation starts from the available data, i.e., it is inductive. Data collection is followed by category formation based on their analysis, from which a theory gradually unfolds based on various comparison methods. The stages of the analytical process – data extraction, their analysis, and theory formation – do not follow each other linearly but occur cyclically and alternately until we reach theoretical saturation, i.e., when we no longer get new results from additional data.

For our analysis, using a theoretical sampling method, we selected textbooks and children's literary works from the period between 1777 and 1830. While from the last third of the 18th century, we mostly chose textbooks (abc books, reader books), by the first half of the 19th century, we had books made for both school and home use at our disposal. Since the research focused on the



examination of the child perspective in written works, we concentrated on the children and the phenomena related to their person in the examined texts. The unit of analysis was formed by the child characters, and we collected data related to them from the texts. The creation of categories was directly based on the data. In this, we followed the theory of Glaser and Kathy Charmaz, according to the latter's statement that one shouldn't impose prior notions or theories on data but should rather try to "follow the direction read out of the data" (Charmaz, 2013, p. 68).

We organized the data into categories using an Excel spreadsheet. One group of data related to the work in which the character appeared, essentially the bibliographic data of the work. The next data group contained the so-called 'demographic characteristics' of the character (name, age, gender, residence). We also recorded information related to the parents (social status, occupation, characteristics, the type of knowledge they passed on to their child). We created a list of the character's traits, and also recorded in the table what happened to the character (cause – effect – consequence).

In the next step, we reviewed the categories and their relationships to each other. From the categories, we highlighted those that had a conspicuously large number of elements (traits, future fulfillment) and also marked those category relationships that we found to need explanation. We organized the research questions around the description and explanation of these highlighted categories and relationships.

## **Main results of the research**

During the Enlightenment, there was a novel attempt at interpreting the world. Science was re-evaluated, and so was the role of reason. New scientific disciplines emerged that not only described but also tried to explain the phenomena of the world. Besides the transformation of disciplines, other changes – such as economic, educational, and technical – also took place, framed by the process of secularization. European absolutist states took over more tasks from the church, the utility-oriented perspective became emphasized, and educational contents changed. Education separated from the religious direction characteristic of the early modern period, and schooling moved into the realm of state responsibility. The newly established educational institutions aimed to ensure that children acquired at least basic general knowledge. Both in Prussia and during the reign of Maria Theresa in the Habsburg Empire, mandatory education was introduced, allowing for the control and guidance of subjects at an early, particularly impressionable stage of life.

In European culture, a change in perspective occurred from the mid-17th century; the

concept regarding the role of science and literature shifted. The social role and nature of literature changed. The secularization of works in terms of their content began in the second half of the 18th century when religious themes receded. Reading habits changed: instead of reading a work repeatedly, people read several books once, and reading itself gradually became a cultural activity. The fact that people now had access to books on diverse topics at affordable prices was due to innovations in printing and cheaper production.

Until the mid-18th century, the focus of educational and teaching efforts was on the acquisition of salvation and the way of life that facilitates it, as well as the child's understanding of their own societal duties and the importance of adhering to them. By the second half of the century, this changed: fictional texts written for children and young people became an effective tool for establishing the new bourgeois society (Hermann, 2005).

From 1777, abc books and reader books were published based on the I. Ratio Educationis; Felbiger's book, translated by Miklós Révai, was used in Catholic primary schools until the mid-19th century. In 1846, Elek Peregriny prepared a new reader book for the government, and with it, "Révai's abc was in use until 1852" (Adamikné Jászó, 1990, p. 209).

Since the Protestant primary schools rejected the use of Felbiger's abc and reader books as the official state textbook, new textbooks were written for Protestant schools. These had little original content, and mostly, the Protestants also used the sources of Felbiger's textbooks. Due to the extensive overlap, regardless of religious denomination, school abc books and reader books had a relatively homogeneous text corpus, which we believe was due to the lack of originality. The roots of the moralizing stories that made their way into the textbooks can be found in Rochow and Campe.

During the research, we sought to answer seven research questions.

### **1. How did they relate to the book in the works of the studied period?**

During the Enlightenment, educators believed that the effectiveness of education could be enhanced by involving life outside the school as well, and this idea was perfectly suited to the use of the book, which was becoming increasingly popular for educating children. Children had no say in choosing books, and this task was performed for them by a person in a higher position (father, teacher, perhaps a priest). The book was held in high esteem, and children essentially used it as if it were a textbook. From the 1820s, we found a book (*Der Jugendführer*) in which the book was already handed to children as an everyday object. In the second half of the studied period, in

addition to knowledge transmission, there is a need for entertainment and amusement in relation to the book for the younger generation.

## **2. What human qualities are considered important in readings?**

Readers could confront the desired or condemned character and behavior forms for society through morally uplifting stories. The stories usually indicated the relevant quality in their title and summarized the lesson at the end. Enlightenment representatives believed that the obstacle to morally correct behavior is often the lack of knowledge (Schelander, 2013). To provide this knowledge, they repeatedly listed primarily positive, secondarily negative characteristics and actions that children will have to follow in their own actions. We looked at the books involved in the study based on the qualities they endowed child characters with.

The expectations of boys and girls in the era we studied gave a mixed picture. There were areas where similar requirements and expectations were formulated for members of the two genders, such as respect and gratitude for parents and teachers. We found that the behavioral expectations for girls were stricter, while parents were more tolerant of boys' behavior. For girls, unlike boys, earlier tasks remained: wife, housewife, mother. The early bourgeois emancipation program did not apply to them, but over time, tasks related to children's education and training were also associated with these (Hermann, 2005).

Based on the books examined, it seems that the most common qualities were expected from children. It is important to note that children and adults were most often characterized by similar qualities in the books. In state textbooks, and sometimes in private-use books, it was important to be authoritarian, to fulfill the requests and instructions of parents and teachers. Beyond obedience to superiors, an important "social quality" was the maintenance of a proper relationship with another person; an expected behavioral norm was, among other things, to help each other when in trouble. Based on moralizing books, qualities related to establishing and maintaining good relationships with others seem especially important. In general, finding the right measure and correcting all bad qualities was expected from the reader.

## **3. What characterizes the childhood perception of the era based on the examined books?**

Based on the examined fictional stories, we find that the image of the child was largely determined by social status and the educational ideas influencing the author. There are universally expected properties for children, such as obedience and respect for parents.

Authors of the stories assumed that, thanks to targeted education, proper behavior will develop

in children. An optimism in the educability and formability of humans is reflected when a child or adult, realizing their mistakes, can change their behavior – see Armbruster, Glatz. In Campe's view, the child is vulnerable, dependent on adults. Based on István Lánghy's book, the child is uneducated and needs guidance in his younger years. In private-use books, such as those by Campe and Glatz, well-bred children are cheerful, healthy, and friendly, and people like them. In the books of Jakob Glatz, who worked at Salzmänn's philanthropic institute, the relationship between family members is particularly intimate. The background to this may be that Christian Gotthilf Salzmänn designed the operation of his educational institution based on a large family model.

István Márton's (1829) principles of education show a close connection with early modern Protestant educational principles. He strongly emphasizes that the child owes obedience to his superiors. Parents are present in the child's life as the legal representatives of God. Based on the texts examined, it seems that in Protestant schoolbooks, the child has to meet his superior (parent), while in private-use books, the community. In this authoritarian educational system, the role of parent and leader merges (see István Márton' and Mihály Kováts-Martiny's books).

#### **4. How do positive and negative traits and behaviors influence people's lives?**

Trust in the teachability of children (*Bildungsoptimismus*) forms the basis of the belief that childhood is an important and essential period for preparing for adult life, which should be planned as well as possible and influenced in every possible way. Why this is so important becomes clear from how adults are portrayed in books. The depiction of adults in children's books clearly reflects contemporary ideas about properly raised individuals. The characteristics here also show noticeable similarities with those of children, with the difference that in the case of adults, the reader can clearly see their fate: active, happy and satisfied or bad and full of suffering.

The dangers caused by harmful human activities are also highlighted in the moralizing stories of the time. Physical injuries, illnesses, or even death are often portrayed as consequences of childish disobedience. The consequences of indiscipline often lead to irreversible harm to the perpetrator. These parable stories served to deter young readers from wrongdoing.

It mattered whether someone got into trouble due to their own fault or not, as people approached them differently: they only had a duty to support someone in trouble if they were not responsible for their misfortune.

**5. To what extent does the future envisioned in children's reading materials correspond to individual and societal utility?**

Based on the readings, the following factors determine the future of children:

- positive and negative traits and characteristics,
- whether they receive help and support from their environment when needed,
- readiness and ability to work,
- upbringing at home,
- health status.

The envisioned future for readers can be analyzed along the following segments:

- financial situation (poverty/wealth),
- development of social relationships (loneliness/acceptance into a community),
- health status (disease, death/health),
- divine justice (God's blessing/curse).

Based on the analyzed stories, if a misfortune occurs, it affects at least one segment among the mentioned factors. The same applies to positive behavior and attributes. The moralizing stories primarily assess children's behavior and actions from a utilitarian perspective. The rewards for good behavior and a patient, enduring attitude are social success and recognition. At the level of the family or local community, this essentially raises the issue of whether family members or acquaintances will help someone in trouble. The consequence of morally reprehensible behavior was impoverishment or the loss of social position (ostracism). Maintaining social order required discipline, which included disciplining children. It was important to make people prioritize the interests of the community over personal ones. Being ostracized from society could lead to existential insecurity.

The ultimate goal of moralizing books was to raise individuals who ensure their own and their family's livelihood through their work and are also willing to help their surroundings. Communities are regulated by laws at the state level, but behavioral norms also appear at the local community level. The moralizing stories primarily provide guidance for these community norms. The stories

in alphabet books and the expectations formulated in reading books address two things: first, establishing and maintaining workability based on proper health and diligence, and second, where to get help if someone becomes incapacitated.

As to why the responsibility to support those in trouble, i.e., those rendered incapacitated, falls on small communities, we believe the answer lies in the fact that the social welfare system had not yet been established by the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The state had not yet taken on the responsibility of supporting the needy, leaving this task to communities. If, for some reason – accident, illness or old age – an individual was not able to work, they mostly relied on their immediate environment. Therefore, it was important for people to establish proper social connections with each other.

## **6. What role do parents play in the upbringing of their children?**

Two types of parents emerge in the books.

### *The authoritarian parent*

Authoritarian parents demand obedience and adherence to rules from their children. The reading material in state textbooks, regardless of school type, depicted the authoritarian parent type. The parent guides the child and deals with him or her with a certain detachment. Parents, both father and mother, often explain religious matters to their child. Parents play a similar role at home as schools, focusing mainly on religious education.

### *The affectionate parent*

The role of the affectionate parent corresponds most closely to the authoritative parenting style. In private use books, parents don't restrict their children to arbitrarily exert power over them; rather, they have their children's best interests in mind when setting boundaries.

The two parental attitudes are also evident in upbringing. Affectionate parents partly try to develop their children's intellectual abilities with thinking exercises and willingly answer their questions. For the detached parents, this kind of home education is lacking or is limited to textbook and religious knowledge. Books intended for home use are usually read by younger children together with one of their parents or possibly a home tutor. These books not only provide guidance for children but also for parents. Through their stories, they draw attention to the dangers that lurked for younger children.

Parents appear in various roles in the readings. Among these roles, the most important are:

*Parent as the child's educator*

Beyond fictional educational situations, books also contain numerous imagined teaching scenarios where a parent educates their child. Typically, books intended for private use are those where more complex knowledge transfer takes place. In state, school books, families living in simpler conditions usually share information related to basic education with their children. For parents to be able to teach their children, they too must possess the knowledge they impart to their children.

*Parent as the person educating on moral values*

Parents play a significant role in the moral education of their children; for parents in books, their primary task is the moral education of their children, and usually both parents contribute to this. Their responsibility is even greater since parents foresee what fate awaits their child if they violate the moral laws of society.

*Parent as the person educating for everyday existence*

Parents prepare their children for civil life: children therefore need to be accustomed to work, and regardless of their financial status, it is the parents' responsibility and duty.

## **7. What educational methods are presented in the books?**

In Enlightenment-era readings, punishment does not appear as a conscious tool of education but as the inevitable consequence of wrong behavior (Wiedemann, 1979). In private-use books, misbehavior was most often not punished, but the consequence itself was the negative outcome resulting from the character flaw or misdeed. Parents generally don't have to punish their children, as due to the consequences of carelessness or disobedience, children are more cautious in the future. Punishment usually means that children confront the consequences of their actions.

## **Evaluation of the applied method and further research opportunities of the topic**

The novelty of the research lies in incorporating the study of prose works intended for children of the Enlightenment into the reconstruction of educational ideas of the period. Based on textbooks and private-use books, we mapped the child perspective of the Hungarian Enlightenment.

A standout result of the research was the realization that textbooks tried to compensate for the state's lack of social involvement by drawing attention to the importance of social relationships and integration, and that deserving needy individuals should be supported by the community. We found that the image of children in readings was typically determined collectively by the author's educational ideas and the social target group of the particular book. This research, with the use of new sources, has brought us closer to understanding the child's perspective of the time, enriching our knowledge of Enlightenment-era education. The novelty of the research lies in proving that data can indeed be extracted from texts not strictly related to education.

The Grounded Theory provided greater research freedom: we could process the topic without constraints, continuously expand sources during the research based on arising questions, and incorporate new aspects into the study based on comparisons of extracted data or categories. We used the Grounded Theory based on Glaser's conception to formulate research questions, as we believed this method could help us approach works for children with a new perspective. We found that the research freedom provided by Grounded Theory allowed us to approach the topic of children's readings from a new angle.

Based on the analyzed children's literary texts, we uncovered some elements of the contemporary image of children and parents. The topic carries numerous further research directions: By expanding the timeframe of the study, the Enlightenment's child perspective can be compared to that of the Romantic era. Examining books based on target groups can provide significant insights into cultural history, allowing for comparison of child perspectives based on denominational distribution. New results can be obtained from examining books from other perspectives, such as the idealized image of teachers or studying the visual material in illustrated books.



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