Editorial

Dear readers, the third issue of this year's *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* publishes thematically very varied articles, five in the Slovenian language and four in English. In the first paper, **Ljubica Marjanovič Umek**, **Urška Fekonja** and **Kaja Hacin** present their empirical findings on the *short- and long-term outcomes of the supplementary programme to support early literacy in preschool*. Using a longitudinal study, the authors studied the effects of the three-month programme in preschool designed to encourage children's early literacy skills. They explain that early literacy refers to the child's vocabulary, storytelling abilities, language comprehension and expression, phonological and metalinguistic awareness, understanding of print and graphomotor skills. Their findings show that the children's early literacy skills improved significantly within the three-month period of the programme's implementation. Those who made the greatest progress in their metalinguistic awareness and graphomotor skills during the first and second assessments also achieved better metalinguistic awareness and graphomotor skills by the end of the first year of primary school. These findings suggest, according to the authors, that children's progress in metalinguistic awareness and graphomotor skills persisted and were maintained until the end of the first year of primary school, which was not the case for children's storytelling abilities. Referring to the curriculum, the researchers conclude that this may be due to the first-year teachers' focus on developing graphomotor skills, whereas preschool teachers more frequently include children in other activities, too, for instance collective reading of stories.

The next article is by **Mojca Medvešek** and it discusses *the views of pupils and parents on the bilingual primary school in Prekmurje*. The author focuses her attention on presenting the results of her study of students' and their parents' perceptions of whether the bilingual school provides adequate education in the mother tongue, both for the language minority and the majority. She also examines whether the model of bilingual education develops successfully students' communication skills regardless of their nationality, thus guaranteeing the Hungarian language an equal status. The study included a sample of bilingual-school students and their parents from the Prekmurje region. The findings indicate that the advantages and benefits of multilingualism are generally well recognised. The author writes that both parents and students are aware of the significance and value of knowing more languages; therefore, bilingual schools are the preferred choice of the parents who wish their children to have better education. Medvešek emphasises that the two-way bilingual (immersion) education model has turned out to be very effective in different parts of the world, provided that it is implemented by linguistically and didactically qualified teachers. This is a problem faced in Prekmurje, with criticism maintaining that some teachers are not proficient enough in the Hungarian language, which leads to less adequate (language) instruction. In addition, there is a lack of suitable bilingual didactic materials.

In the third article of this issue, **Nina Breznikar** studies self-evaluation in primary schools in Slovenia. She stresses that the development of self-evaluation is

closely related to an enhanced institutional and individual autonomy of schools and teachers, since taking on decision-making responsibilities regarding the school's educational activities requires that the decisions, process quality and education outcomes should be monitored and evaluated. The Slovenian school system has been developing complex approaches to self-evaluation mostly through various projects, but there has been no common model of implementation or guidelines to support schools in self-evaluation. This has led to various ambiguities about how the concept of self-evaluation is understood, but especially to big differences in how self-evaluation is implemented in individual schools. In her article, Breznikar thus enquires as to how individual schools approach self-evaluation in practice and how they implement it. The findings of the multiple descriptive case study confirm that there are big differences in understanding and implementing self-evaluation among selected schools, with one possible reason for such diversity being inconsistencies at the national level. The author argues that high-quality self-evaluation would require a formal framework as a foundation for financial, human and infrastructural resources.

Mateja Hadler's topic is a little more specific, namely *the stereotypes and prejudices regarding the Roma in selected youth prose*. Studying Roma youth literature, the author has collected over 220 poems, fairy tales and novels that were written in Slovenian by Roma authors or that belong to Roma folk literature. She has also collected youth literature texts dealing with Roma issues written by non-Roma authors. Having analysed a selection of literary texts, Hadler clearly and systematically identifies the stereotypes and prejudices in selected examples of youth literature, pointing to the potential of multicultural literature to overcome them. The author finds that Slovenian youth literature demonstrates largely uncritical, unaccepting attitudes towards the Roma: the Roma characters are shown stereotypically, negatively. Furthermore, the environment's attitudes towards them are also negative and their attempts at adjustment or integration in the majority culture usually fail.

The last article in the Slovenian-language section of this issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* was written by **Melita Lemut Bajec**. It discusses *developing the concept of cultural heritage through CLIL*. The author carried out a pedagogical experiment in the second year of grammar-school English classes, using teamwork and cross-curricular connections with history, to establish whether, in comparison with other learning approaches, the CLIL approach contributes to better-quality knowledge and achieving goals at higher taxonomic levels. The author concludes that the CLIL approach enabled better results in the entire knowledge assessment test, but she was unable to demonstrate statistically better results in achieving goals at the highest taxonomic levels or any impact of the approach on the awareness of cultural heritage.

The last three articles are published in English only, and they were written by authors from Croatia and Italy. In their article, *Predictors of Distributed School Leadership in Croatian Primary Schools*, **Iva Buchberger, Vesna Kovač** and **Branko Rafajac** discuss the features of distributed school leadership in Croatian primary schools, in particular with regard to its three central theoretical and

practical dimensions: the participation of stakeholders in the process of school leadership; social relations between the participants in this process; and different stakeholders' influence on the decision-making process. The results of the study presented in the article suggest that, in Croatia, the number of primary schools with less developed distributed school leadership is approximately the same as the number of schools with more developed distributed school leadership. The findings also confirm a statistically significant positive correlation between the level of all three predictor groups and the level of distributed school leadership features. These results imply that introducing certain policy measures could contribute to the enforcement of distributed school leadership features in Croatian primary schools, which could in turn assist policymakers at all levels of decision-making in the Croatian education system.

The last but one article is from Croatia, too. **Adriana Ažić Bastalić, Branko Rafajac** and **Nena Rončević** present *the construction and validation of the questionnaire that assesses parents' perspectives of school effectiveness in Croatia.* The questionnaire was tested on a sample of 2245 parents whose children attended primary and secondary schools in Croatia. The items of the questionnaire were created by analysing recent literature and existing research in the field. Construct validity was tested using exploratory factor analysis and internal validation was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. Four independent factors were identified: encouragement of high achievement in schools and student support; discipline and safety; school equipment and the interior; and parental involvement in the school's functioning. The authors also looked at the differences in the parents' attitudes on specific subscales in relation to sociodemographic variables (i.e. gender, age, working status, level of education, marital status, and the level/year of education their child attends). The results confirmed the existence of the four identified independent constructs.

The last article in this issue is by **Simonetta Polenghi**, who presents *changes in teacher education in Italy from Italian unification to today.* She discusses trends in teacher education in Italy, focusing on preschool, primary- and secondary-school teacher training. Among others, she examines the implementation of the training courses for the teachers of students with special needs and inclusive teaching. The author writes that teacher training in Italy reached a turning point with the adoption of Law no. 341 in 1990, which established a new system of university education for schoolteachers of all levels. After that, in 1998, a four-year degree course for future preschool and primary teachers was implemented, and junior and senior schoolteachers were required to attend a two-year specialisation programme from 1999 onwards. In 2010 a five-year teacher-training course was implemented for preschool and primary-school teachers, providing an adequate teaching qualification and using a different curriculum. However, secondary-school teacher training became critical after the two-year specialisation course had been abolished.

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