

Editorial

Changing Teacher Education for Changing Schools

The thematic focus of the last issue in volume thirteen of the CEPS Journal is 'Changing Teacher Education for Changing Schools'. The discussion around how teachers behave in their roles and how they behave in school (Beijaard et al., 2000; Hargreaves, 1994) is closely related to policies and practices in initial teacher education. In parallel, teacher education has been subject to continuous reform in recent decades. The debate has been centred around the demands for teacher qualification levels, the competencies and skills that teacher education graduates need to acquire as they transition to school, and the ways teacher education is responding to the ever-increasing pressure on the teaching profession to change. While the trend towards increasing teacher qualifications (making the master's level a minimum requirement) at the international level has continued without any critical review, the developments around the other two dimensions remain an important topic of debate in academic literature and policy debates.

One important theme in addressing the above dimensions is how teacher education is bridging the theory-practice gap (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and handling the dichotomy between an academic and a pedagogical orientation with regard to the task of teaching (Beijaard et al., 2000). The traditional views of perceiving the task of teaching as knowledge transfer have been countered by views that teacher education needs to prepare prospective teachers for broader roles of dealing with the complexities of learning and the societies they serve. In light of this evolving understanding of the roles of teachers, the concept of pedagogical content knowledge for teachers has started to gain greater importance (originating from Shulman, 1986).

While the struggle to determine the policy and practice of teacher education continues, more evidence is needed to delve deeper into what constitutes quality teacher education that prepares teachers to respond to the desired professionalism, reflecting the necessary competencies for and attitudes towards the task of teaching.

The authors in the Focus section of this CEPS journal more specifically focused on the following questions: 1) What are good models of initial teacher education to address the concepts of academic knowledge, general education knowledge and subject pedagogy in such a way that they all interrelate in preparing teachers for the today's school systems?, 2) How can initial teacher education manage the local and external pressure that is exerted on the teaching profession in relation to the balance between academic and pedagogical

orientation?, 3) How can teacher education institutions manage the tensions between the academic and pedagogical dimensions of preparing teachers, ensuring an adequate balance?, and 4) What are good practices of addressing the theory-praxis gap during initial teacher education including the elements of school placement?

In the present issue of the CEPS Journal, 11 authors from different countries discuss the importance of changing teacher education for changing schools in their papers. Three papers are part of the Focus section, and seven papers, written by 17 authors, can be found in the Varia section of the present issue. At the end, one book review is also presented.

The first paper by Ilich Silva-Peña, Julio Hizmeri, Roxana Hormazábal-Fajardo, Bessie Rojas-Rodríguez, Enriqueta Jara-Illanes and Gustavo González-García, entitled *Practicum of Early Childhood Teacher Students in Pandemic Times: A Narrative Perspective*, deals with one specific aspect in which the Covid-19 pandemic affected teacher education. In the context of the pandemic, universities had to adapt quickly through emergency pedagogy. One of the problems that emerged was the relationship between schools and teacher students. The situation was more critical in early childhood teacher education than in others. The conditions forced them to adjust to the absence of children in the student teachers' practicum. The article addresses the relational problem in practicum in early childhood teacher education. Through a narrative inquiry with two early childhood education teacher students, we give an account of learning experiences in different educational spaces. During the analysis, two concepts emerged: 'the classroom taste' and 'presence' in teacher education. The research enables us to reflect on the essential focus of the practicum in early childhood teacher education from the perspective of these two concepts.

In the second paper, entitled *An Exploration of Teacher Leadership: Are Future Teachers Ready to Lead?* Jetë Aliu and Fjolla Kaçaniku discuss the teaching profession, which has become increasingly complex in recent decades. The changing role of teachers has called for a new paradigm of the teaching profession that recognises the potential of teachers to lead in supporting school development and change. The influence teachers have on the school community and their commitment to school change are at the core of teacher leadership definitions. Preparing future teachers to act as leaders in their schools can support the overall efforts for school improvement. Hence, this study aims to explore pre-service teacher leadership development. The study utilised a qualitative methodology to address 1) pre-service teachers' understanding of teacher leadership, 2) the role of initial teacher education in shaping the understanding of teacher leadership and 3) the contribution of initial teacher education

to pre-service teachers' readiness for exercising leadership roles for school improvement. The study was conducted with pre-service teachers in Kosovo's leading initial teacher education institution. A total of 42 pre-service teachers from all years of the primary teacher education programme participated in four group interviews with the aim of discussing in depth the core elements of teacher leadership in order to better grasp the pre-service teachers' understanding of this concept as well as their readiness to exercise leadership roles. The findings reveal that there is no consensus on the definition of teacher leadership and that the understanding of teacher leadership is based on the contextually drawn vision of what it means to be a teacher, influencing a narrow view of leadership towards individual and classroom levels. This study concludes that initial teacher education has a critical role in contributing towards shifting the conceptualisation of teacher leadership beyond the isolated views of individual and formal leadership. The findings of this study have imperative implications for providing good models of initial teacher education that support the preparation and readiness of future teacher leaders to tackle the ever-increasing complexities of the teaching profession.

In the next paper by Susanne Kink-Hampersberger, Lisa Scheer and Iris Mendel, *Between Academia and School: Habitus Reflexivity as One Way of Dealing with the Theory-Practice Tension in Teacher Education*, the authors discuss issues concerning teacher education's primary goal is to train prospective teachers, which differs from study programmes, such as philosophy or mathematics, that do not cater to defined professions. This traditional understanding of the teaching profession becomes apparent when students ask: 'How is this content, topic, method, task, or question relevant to school work?' It is also reflected in the inclusion of practical school training in teacher education curricula. In Austria's teacher training, these practical elements are accompanied by theoretical and methodological teaching foundations. However, students often question the applicability of theoretical knowledge to the teaching profession, which creates tension between the academic and pedagogical orientations. This paper discusses these very theory-practice tensions in teacher education based on findings from the project 'Habitus.Power.Education', which involved students and teachers at an Austrian university. We argue that teacher training at universities is neither merely a place for producing a future workforce nor a self-growth space without purpose. Teacher training, rather, combines both (sometimes uncertain) elements: education in its broadest sense and professional training. Using empirical material, it is shown that the theory-praxis gap manifests in the tension between academic and pedagogical orientation. To address and mediate this tension, the concept of habitus reflexivity is proposed.

Promoting such a form of reflexivity among students makes it possible to bridge the gap between the different logics of university and school. Furthermore, it helps to comprehend inequality and power imbalances in the education system and develop agency, which is essential for navigating the ever-changing and complex world of modern schools.

The next seven papers belong to the *Varia* section of the issue. The paper entitled *Disciplinary Differences and University Teachers' Perspectives: Possibilities of Applying the Teaching Perspectives Inventory* by Jovana Milutinović, Biljana Lungulov, and Aleksandra Anđelković examines the differences in the university teachers' perspectives from various academic disciplines and faculties. Their research also aimed to validate the Teaching Perspectives Inventory on a sample of 526 university teachers in Serbia. The results confirmed the differences in the university teachers' perspectives and led to the conclusion that hard science teachers were more teacher-centred, while soft science teachers were more student-centred. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis indicated that the slightly modified version of the TPI is applicable and reliable to use in other educational contexts. The authors concluded that research on teachers' perspectives is limited to specific cultural, educational, and research contexts.

The fifth paper, entitled *Validation of the Strategy for Determining the Numerical Rating of the Cognitive Complexity of Exam Items in the Field of Chemical Kinetics*, by Saša Horvat, Dušica Rodić, Nevena Jović, Tamara Rončević, and Snežana Babić-Kekez validates the strategy for the assessment of the cognitive complexity of chemical kinetics exam items. The strategy included three steps: 1) assessment of the difficulty of concepts, 2) assessment of distractor value, and 3) assessment of concepts' interactivity. One of the tasks was to determine whether there were misconceptions by students that might have influenced their achievement. Eighty-seven students in the first year of secondary school participated in the study. A knowledge test was used as a research instrument to assess the performance, and a five-point Likert-type scale was used to evaluate the perceived mental effort. The strategy was validated using regression analysis, from which significant correlation coefficients were obtained between selected variables.

The next paper, by Beata Horníčková, entitled *University Preparation of Kindergarten Teachers for English Teaching in the Czech Republic*, aims to determine the level of preparation of future teachers for teaching English to pre-primary school children at individual universities in the Czech Republic. It presents findings obtained through quantitative content analysis of the syllabi of eight universities that provide education in teacher training for kindergartens and focus on preparing future teachers for English teaching. The results

show that courses for English teaching in kindergarten are not implemented by every university. Universities differ in their emphasis on foreign language tuition in kindergarten, reflected in the number and content of provided courses.

The seventh paper, entitled *The Saga of Academic Autonomy in Slovenia (1919–1999)* by Pavel Zgaga, examines the concept of academic autonomy within the ‘Yugoslav model’ of higher education as a peripheral system characterised by an eclectic mix of elements from different systems, resulting in mutations with unique features during its development. The hitherto under-researched history of this higher education model has by no means been uniform or linear; because of this complexity, the focus here is limited to the case of Slovenia but considers the broader context. The focus is on the understanding, legislation, and (non-) implementation of academic autonomy as articulated between 1945 and 1991. The concept was inherited: it was never used in the legislation of federal socialist Yugoslavia, yet it was used in political and public debates. Our analysis relates these debates to the rapidly changing legislation and the broader socio-political context. Although the ‘Yugoslav model’ has vanished, its traces and ashes, including old contradictions and dilemmas, remain partly present in the higher education systems of independent states that emerged on the territory of the former federation. The principle that knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present and approaching the future is also confirmed in this case.

The next paper, by Kimberly Battjes and Lilly Zane Kaplan, entitled *Zero Tolerance vs Restorative Justice in the United States*, discusses discipline policies in schools across the United States. They argue that as schools have begun to move away from the harsh ‘Zero Tolerance’ policies that characterised the better part of the previous three decades, there is an opportunity to change the focus of school discipline. Frequently, school discipline policies are centred on punitive approaches that separate students from their peers. Rather than meeting the needs of these students, schools alienate them from their peers, teachers, and school communities. The goal of the education system is to provide children and adolescents with a high-quality education that will allow them to grow into productive and participating members of society. Zero Tolerance and school discipline policies were created to protect students, but, in practice, these policies have proven to be harmful and have unintended consequences. Too often, punitive disciplinary action in the school setting puts students on a pathway to the juvenile or criminal justice system. Although the Zero Tolerance policy is a federal initiative, many states are beginning to realise the harmful impacts this policy has on students, especially marginalised students. As a result, states are beginning to pass legislation that veers away from Zero Tolerance, focusing more on alternatives like restorative practices.

The ninth paper, entitled *Recognising and Expressing Emotions: Difficulties of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Learning a Foreign Language and How to Resolve Them*, by Ayşe Tuna, presents the meaning of recognising emotions, facial expressions and tone of voice and body language. It also illustrates expressing and managing their own emotions; understanding and responding to other people's emotions are often difficult for children with autism spectrum disorder. Since the emotional codes of individuals with autism spectrum disorder are different, those people will possibly be awkward in expressing some throughout their lives. Although it might seem that children with autism spectrum disorder do not respond emotionally, the ability to understand their facial expressions could lead to an improvement in their social interaction difficulties. In addition, since autistic expressions might be unique to each child, recognising their emotions is important when delivering a personalised intervention to a child with autism spectrum disorder. In recent decades, researchers have become increasingly interested in the role of emotions in learning and teaching a foreign language beyond heavily investigated topics such as foreign language anxiety and motivation and attitudes towards the foreign language. This paper presents how emotions impact the motivation and success of children with autism spectrum disorder while they are learning a foreign language. Challenges, opportunities, and future research directions in this domain are given.

The last paper of this issue, by Jure Žabkar, Tajda Urankar, Karmen Javornik, and Milena Košak Babuder, entitled *Identifying Reading Fluency in Pupils with and without Dyslexia Using a Machine Learning Model on Texts Assessed with a Readability Application*, presents the study of building a machine learning model. This model discriminates between pupils identified with dyslexia and a control group without dyslexia based on fluency in oral reading of texts assessed with a readability application developed within the project 'For the Quality of Slovenian Textbooks'. We focus on differentiation between both groups of pupils by analysing data obtained from transcriptions of audio recordings of oral reading. The empirical study was conducted with 27 pupils aged 8 and 9 with officially diagnosed dyslexia and a control group without identified dyslexia.

The issue concludes with the book review by Katja Koren Ošljak. She analyses and evaluates the book by Giovanna Mascheroni and Andra Siibak with the title *Datafied Childhoods: Data Practices and Imaginaries in Children's Lives*.

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