

Editorial

Dear readers, the last days of December have also brought the last issue of our journal for this year. Something we have not expressly mentioned before is that the journal celebrated its 130th anniversary this year. When it was first established in 1880, the journal was named *Popotnik (Traveler)*; in the last sixty-three years, it has been known by numerous generations of educators as *Sodobna pedagogika (Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies)*. In Slovenia, there are few magazines or journals – and even fewer scientific journals – that could pride themselves on a three-digit volume number. It is with pride that we report that the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* is not only a preeminent Slovenian scientific journal, but also the journal with the longest and most distinguished tradition in the field of education. After more than a century of publication, its existence is taken for granted by every expert and educator working in education. We are proud of the fact that Slovenian pedagogy can hardly be imagined without the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies*. However, we should not be lulled into ignoring the fact that self-evidence is only an appearance; this is undoubtedly true in regards to publishing scientific periodicals in Slovenia.

The publishing of scientific periodicals has long been a profitable business globally. This is not limited to sales of journals or individual articles (often presenting findings of publicly funded research), but also includes the increasingly thriving industry of bibliographic database indexes. On one hand, this certainly contributes to a higher international recognizability of individual journals, as the comprehensive Internet search engines allow readers from all over the world to access the articles published in our journal – something practically unimaginable just fifteen years ago. Those of you who have been following the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* carefully will have noticed some content and editorial changes introduced in the last few years. The journal has become part of two major bibliographic databases, ProQuest and EbscoHost, which relates to the fact that each issue is published (though not in its entirety) bilingually. We are still striving to include the journal in other bibliographic databases managed by multinational corporations such as Thomson Reuters and Elsevier, primarily because the inflow of high-quality scientific articles depends to a large degree on the journal's inclusion in such databases. Current Slovenian policy is to measure researchers' scientific work not by its quality or content, but predominantly by whether a scientific text is published in the right place (read: in a journal indexed by one of the above-mentioned multinational corporations). Such evaluation of scientific achievements is one of the reasons we are attempting to include our journal in the bibliographic databases, which results in other positive impacts, as well: we have been including a wider range of contributors from a wider international area, we have enlarged the editorial board with distinguished foreign experts, we have given more attention to the exact methodology of scientific articles, etc. While becoming more international, we will always remain a leading *Slovenian* scientific journal, featuring highly relevant content. We have made important

contributions to the educational sciences in Slovenia, including the development of Slovenian scientific terminology and methodology, and although this is not always as interesting to our international readership, it is absolutely necessary for high-quality reflection within the local educational space.

As **Tadej Vidmar**, author of the introductory article *The 130th volume of the Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies (Popotnik and Sodobna pedagogika) – position and polemics* writes, the journal (both when still called *Popotnik* and later as *Sodobna pedagogika*) has always been a place devoted to presenting and confronting different (critical) views, thinking, and suggestions in the field of education. As a rule, its editorial policies have allowed for – even encouraged – a pluralism of views and convictions and has attempted to introduce readers to the best information in the areas of pedagogic theory and practice. Vidmar analyzes three significant polemics in the journal, which serve as an illustration of its positions in the selected periods. Such polemics and scientific contributions enabled *Popotnik* to become the most eminent pedagogic journal in Slovenia, a reputation that *Sodobna pedagogika* has successfully retained and strengthened. In the future – here we align with Vidmar’s wish – our readers and authors will make it possible for the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* to continue improving upon its excellent tradition of the past 130 years in spite of the flood of “instant” pedagogic literature.

The second article, written by **Taja Kramberger**, approaches a topic that is historical, but no less relevant to our time. In *German universities and their policy during the era of National Socialism: deliberative politicization of knowledge, anti-intellectualism, and abolishment of autonomy* the author exposes the principal National Socialist university modifications, which resulted in the creation of the new “political university” and the abolishment of university autonomy. She analyzes the processes of university reorganization, including the deregulation of academic freedom, the reorganization of university management, the reorganization of the recruitment, promotion and habilitation of teachers, the prevention of international exchanges and the rejection of international scientific criteria, the disabling of assistantship, university collegiality and cooperation, the maintenance of the sense of employment insecurity, and the intimidation of outspoken professors. Kramberger critically presents the manner in which the National Socialist university reforms simplified the state control over universities by, for instance, abolishing the most autonomous and representative university bodies, while at the same time bringing in politically vetted designees. Thus, they displaced the center of university *raison d’être* and did away with university autonomy through a number of small administrative transformations and redefinitions carried out in the spirit of aggressive anti-intellectualism and pragmatic utilitarianism. This completely degraded the academic mission and ruined the old academic *ethos*. We should not overlook the author’s assertion that the rapidity of this transformation would not have been possible without the voluntary, spontaneous adaptation of the majority of the university personnel.

In the article *Researching and directing the hidden curriculum*, **Anita Jug Došler** presents the results of her case study. The author begins by emphasizing

that the hidden curriculum is importantly defined by the factors relating to preschool education quality indicators at all three quality levels: process, structural, and indirect levels. It can also be understood as the “battleground” of various competing influences and ideologies that appears in preschools and schools in a hidden manner. Since, according to Jug Došler, the Preschool Curriculum moves from strictly content towards process/developmental and goal-oriented planning – thereby becoming more open – educators are given more professional autonomy, which can also present additional danger in the factors of the hidden curriculum. On the basis of the Preschool Curriculum, the findings of relevant Slovenian and international research studies, the presented conceptual and methodological approaches to monitoring and assessing preschool education quality in relation to the hidden curriculum, as well as quality levels, areas, and indicators, the author developed an education and training model for researching and directing the factors of the hidden curriculum. The model, also practically tested by the author, turned out to be effective in supporting and improving the pedagogic work of preschool teachers, particularly at the process level of quality. Using the processes of action and evaluation research, and facing (raising awareness) the preschool teachers with their own concepts, the model enabled them to research and direct the factors of the hidden curriculum, consequently improving the quality of educational work in preschools.

Certain fundamental curricular issues, especially those relating to knowledge assessment and conducting the educational process, are the topic of *Perceived traits as a factor of academic achievement in different groups of pupils* by **Mojca Peček, Ivan Čuk** and **Irena Lesar**. Their research study, results of which are the partially presented here, examines academic achievement levels and considers the effect of the traits that teachers ascribe to different students (those they perceive as “regular”, students with special needs, Roma students, children of immigrants from former Yugoslavia, and children of poor parents). Their results show that children of wealthy parents are the highest academic achievers, followed by those that teachers recognize as “regular”. As far as children from marginalized groups are concerned, the academic results of poor children are somewhat lower – but not statistically significantly – than the results of children of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia; the results of children with special needs are statistically significantly lower, whereas the academic achievements of Roma children are the lowest. The authors interpret the results as showing that some traits that teachers perceive in students feature more prominently as indicators for determining students’ academic achievements. However, these traits are not the same in all the researched groups of students, although they tend to be primarily related to efficacy. Therefore, the authors conclude, the classroom is a space where surprising transactions between teachers and students take place and where teachers’ reactions to students’ traits depend on teachers’ initial perceptions.

This issue also publishes two high-quality professional papers. In the first, **Alenka Jurič Rajh** presents the *Common tasks shared by the pedagogue and headteacher, written in the program guidelines for the primary school counseling service*. The author starts by emphasizing that in the Slovenian school system,

the counseling service has a special role and responsibility to work together with students, teachers, head teachers, parents, and other participants in the educational process. In her paper, however, the author is primarily interested in the cooperation between the counseling service and the head teacher. She writes that the cooperation of the counseling service with the school management is highly varied and is conducted at different levels. The findings of her research study demonstrate that – in spite of a number of positive conclusions – new program guidelines for primary school counseling should be prepared, taking into account all the fields that the counselor has to work in nowadays. In regards to cooperation with the head teacher, Jurič Rajh states that the following areas should be included: enrollment in school, participation of students with special needs, learning problems, foreigners and immigrants, and the implementation and evaluation of the school educational plan. The author stresses the need for consideration of the degree to which specific tasks should be defined and how broadly or narrowly this should be done. It is of the utmost importance that the school counselor and the head teacher have an open communication and a free exchange of information. According to the author, at the system level, in-service training should be considered to complement the counselor's knowledge, particularly in the areas that she/he had the least opportunity to study during her/his studies. Such in-service training would be particularly useful in schools which employ only one counselor and are therefore unable to complement different school-counseling profiles in an interdisciplinary manner.

This issue is concluded by *Diagnostic assessment of prereading competence*, in which **Ivanka Bider Petelin** discusses the issue of assessing children's prereading competence at the time of their entrance to primary school. In the introductory section of the article, the author defines the "diagnostic assessment" of prereading competence as a flexible and dynamic process of collecting data about children. The data served as the basis for the development of expert opinions and the adoption of adequate measures for each individual child in regard to teaching and reading instruction. In other words, the aim of the diagnostic assessment of prereading competence is to support pupils and help to diagnose any problems they may have during the learning process. The author presents a detailed evaluation of two instruments used to test prereading competence: the *test of early reading competences* developed by B. Jurišić and the English test *Cognitive Profiling System (COPS)*. The test of early reading competences is intended for children between five and six years of age and is suitable for establishing early reading competence in children prior to entering school, as well as for evaluating pupils during the first primary school educational period. It enables the distribution of children into two groups – a group with a risk of future problems with learning to read and a group without this risk. The English COPS test is a computer-based psychometric instrument, standardized for children between the ages of four years and eight years and eleven months. It has been designed in the form of a computer game, which is supposed to be more motivating for children. The results provide an insight into a child's cognitive skills and weaknesses. For instance, this test can help us to identify dyslexia or specific learning difficulties, individual

educational needs, developmental problems, and the dominant learning style. This contribution is certainly relevant and very informative, especially for the teachers who are faced with early literacy development in their practice. Nevertheless, certain terminological (and, at least indirectly, conceptual) issues, particularly those concerning the translation of the English term *assessment* into Slovenian, require further attention.

Dear readers, let me wish you, at the end of this calendar year, a lot of pleasant moments, exciting ideas, and critical thoughts – stimulated not only, but also by, the company of the *Journal of Educational Studies*!

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Editor-in-chief*