

Editorial

Dear readers, the first issue of this year's volume includes a wide selection of texts from the area of education. We hope reading them will give you scholarly pleasure and perhaps stimulate you to respond to what the authors have written. We are lacking in more polemical contributions to our journal, and we will be glad to receive your expertly argued responses.

The topic of the first contribution is from the area of preschool education. In *The professional challenges of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach: Curriculum planning and the evaluation of educational work in preschools*, **Mojca Kovač Šebart** and **Andreja Hočevar** critically analyze the thesis of the supporters of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical approach, who claim that a curriculum planned and structured in advance does not put the child center stage; rather, they maintain that guidelines for planning educational work hinder children from becoming the focus of the educational process. Yet Kovač Šebart and Hočevar demonstrate that such an exclusive logic does not withstand critical examination. They believe it would be reasonable to insist on the convergence of curriculum planning strategies, which would enable maintaining their advantages as well as establishing safeguards against their disadvantages. The authors also discuss the concept of preschool quality evaluation that problematizes evaluation based on the empirical data gathered through methodologically appropriate prepared instruments. The critics of such an approach to evaluation state it is a concept founded on universal norms formulated by experts, leading to classification and normalization. The authors of the article, however, argue that – at least as far as the extensive network of public preschools in Slovenia is concerned – such a concept of preschool quality evaluation is less risky and more in accordance with the objective reality.

The always topical issue of *Multilingual learning and teaching as a principle of inclusive practice*, as it is defined in the title of the next article, is investigated by **Sonja Rutar**. Her thesis is that multilingual learning and teaching are founded on human and children's rights. She approaches multilingualism as a pedagogic principle of ensuring inclusion which – due to the various forms of and reasons for bilingualism and multilingualism – retains the child's first language and develops sensitivity toward children in the process of second-language acquisition. Conceptualizing bilingualism/multilingualism in preschools and schools, the author aims at drawing attention to the laws and characteristics of the educational process that includes children whose first language does not represent the dominant language in the children's formal educational environment and who primarily come from socially underprivileged backgrounds. In particular, she emphasizes the fact that children's (and their parents') first languages enjoy different statuses and levels of recognition in society. Consequently, the inclusion of children coming from non-dominant cultures and weak socioeconomic backgrounds is significantly more difficult than – as well as different from – the situation of children coming

from dominant cultures and environments where those languages are spoken which children, but especially parents tend to choose as a second language worthy of understanding, speaking, and writing, i.e., what they perceive to be as the language that could enable their children to connect, communicate, and learn about other cultures. The author relates her findings to the issue of Roma children learning Slovenian as a second language. She argues that Roma children find themselves in a less favorable situation with respect to preliteracy competence acquisition in their own language, which they could use when learning their second language after entering school since they gain fewer skills in their language which are needed for good academic achievement in school. Preliteracy competences are developed both orally and in various written forms in children's everyday environments (books, posters, newspapers, etc.). Roma children, however, have very few opportunities, if any at all, to develop such competences in their first language. Based on her findings, the author develops the principles of planning multilingual teaching based on the inclusive paradigm of theory and practice.

While the third article, *Reflection on sensible adjustments for students with special needs through different perspectives* by **Adrijana Biba Rebolj**, addresses the questions that our academic practice considers, there is little theoretical basis in the professional literature to enable the formation of a concept regarding adjustments for students with special needs. Therefore, we often encounter doubts and embarrassment when adjusting the study process for students with special needs. Specifically, there is an incorrect understanding of the meaning of adjustments, a fear of lowering academic standards, and a feeling of incompetence when planning and implementing adjustments. On the one hand, there is the inexperience of educators, and on the other hand, the insecurity of students. As for adjustments, the author stresses the following two dimensions: adjustments at the declarative level and adjustments at the interpersonal level. Rebolj focuses on adjustments for students with special needs at the interpersonal level, which she understands as an interaction between a member of the pedagogical staff and the student with special needs. This interaction is marked by the viewpoints and expectations of both participants with regard to the adjustments. The author starts from the assumption that educators are autonomous when defining standards for each subject, while students have a right to sensible adjustments. If communication between the parties is not established, an unproductive or even conflicting relationship is very likely to develop. An additional reason for that lies in the disagreements between students and educators regarding what a sensible adjustment is. Moreover, there are few provisions and guidelines for how adjustments should be planned and implemented. The article primarily attempts to present different perspectives of adjustments for students with special needs at the micro level to contribute to the search for fair, sensible, effective, and useful adjustments for all participants involved in the process.

The articles just summarized can be said to examine the different aspects of the very broad topic of providing learners with special needs with good-quality education. Following these articles is the text by **Klara Skubic Ermenc**, in which the author considers certain fundamental terminological problems of educational

sciences that we are commonly faced with when translating established Slovenian terms into English and vice versa. In her article *Translating an educational term into the English language and example of comparative education*, she states that translation dilemmas are further worsened by the Anglicization in the academic and research fields, which is why educators often connect issues of translation with issues of the identity of their science. As far as the Slovenian term “pedagogika” is concerned, according to the author, it can be translated into English as “pedagogy” when it retains its normative assumptions and therefore situates its research questions, research procedures, and interpretations within the norms it strives for; when it emphasizes the balance between theory and practice, that is, when it conducts both research and practical actions dialectically; and when it connects to other sciences by maintaining the centrality of its research topics and research principles, while at the same time enriching and updating its research with the findings of other sciences. In relation to translation issues, the author also analyzes the position of comparative education as an education science discipline. It is characterized by defining itself in terms of its normativity, focusing on educational questions, or associating the research of education with them. At the same time, it looks for a balance between the inductive and deductive approaches, between theory and practice, and between explaining phenomena and developing useful solutions.

The next article introduces a topic that has not been frequently explored by scholarly contributions to the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* thus far. In *Drama in education: key conceptual features*, **Gökçen Özbek** presents the key conceptual characteristics of the drama method, particularly in educational contexts, and analyzes its various manifestations and their related approaches (drama as an art form, drama in education, and the so-called integrative approach to drama). The author defines drama that includes and takes account of the individual’s cognitive and emotional dimensions as a learning process in which learning happens through pre-structured and planned experiences, including playing, reorganized playing, and the drama context. After presenting this theoretical background, the author concludes her article by elaborating on the structure of drama in education, which has some distinguishing characteristics in comparison with traditional teaching methods. The author is right in stressing that drama in education should not be understood as a substitute method or an exclusive alternative to established didactic strategies. Rather, it should be seen as a complementary didactic activity that can be used productively for a better quality and more effective attainment of certain educational goals in various educational programs.

The last contribution to this issue of our journal, *Design-based research in educational research context*, was written by **Majda Cencič** and **Tina Štemberger**. They present a type of research that examines how to bring educational research closer to the needs of pedagogical practice. Although design-based research is well known and fairly widely used abroad, only a few texts can be found in Slovenian scientific literature. Therefore, the authors start by reviewing the beginnings, development, and distinctive features of this research type. They compare design-

based research to both action research and pedagogical experiment. Cencič and Štemberger underline both the advantages and usefulness of the design-based research as well as its drawbacks. The advantage, according to the authors, is the fact that design-based research is undertaken in a genuine educational situation. Additionally, the collaboration of practitioners, researchers, and innovators relates different disciplines and expertise, thereby narrowing or closing the gap between educational research and the reality of educational practice. It is directed toward improving practice (i.e., instruction) as well as developing theory in a specific area. The disadvantage that the authors see in this research type is the weak theoretical methodological foundation and the dilemma regarding the criteria for the acceptance, abandonment, or continuation of design-based research.

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