

Editorial

This issue of CEPSj introduces papers that are not a part of a specific focus but fall into the category of *Varia*. The content of the papers differs, and they comprise topics from students' understanding of pictures in books, how sustainable development goals are integrated into the home economics context, how to evaluate students' environmental worldviews and concerns, what the relationship between the factors and conditions of the autonomy of pre-school teachers is and how they foster the autonomy of pre-school children, what language teachers' discriminatory practices against students are, to music education with a paper about rhyming in the context of the phonological awareness of pre-school children.

The first paper by Janja Batič entitled *Reading Picture Books in Preschool and Lower Grades of Primary School* introduces the results of a research study that involved 443 pre-school and primary school teachers. The investigation's objective was to discover teachers' views on making picture book reading a part of the teaching process, how picture book reading was incorporated into the process, and how a productive visual response to a picture book was designed. The results indicated that the surveyed teachers do consider picture books to be appropriate, not only for very young children, and they had no difficulties selecting an appropriate picture book. Half of the respondents noted that children or students visually expressed their impressions after reading a picture book. The replies also indicated that, regarding picture books within the teaching process, an unused potential remains in terms of developing children's visual and multimodal literacy.

The second paper entitled *In-service Home Economics Teachers' Attitudes to the Integration of Sustainable Topics in the Home Economics Subject*, by Martina Erjavšek, Francka Lovšin Kozina, and Stojan Kostanjevec, presents education for sustainable development in the discipline of home economics. The purpose of this paper is to ascertain whether in-service teachers of home economics recognise the opportunities to educate students about sustainable development in their courses and if they can identify the topics related to sustainable development that they can integrate into the subject of home economics. A questionnaire was distributed to 89 Slovenian in-service home economics teachers. The results were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed, which revealed that in-service home economics teachers understand that the topics of the subject promote education for sustainable development. They see the most opportunities for integrating sustainable topics arising in food and living environments and less in economics and textiles. Based on the research results,

the authors emphasise that it can be deduced that in-service home economics teachers should be offered ongoing professional development in order to achieve the competences needed to teach sustainable development as part of home economics. They also pointed out that there is a need to update the home economics curriculum subject as it offers numerous opportunities to educate students about sustainable living topics.

The third paper, by Gregor Torkar, Vanja Debevec, Bruce Johnson, and Constantinos C. Manoli, *Assessing children's environmental worldviews and concerns*, illustrates the research about the assessment the environmental worldviews and concerns of students from the fourth to the seventh grades in Slovenia. The New Ecological Paradigm Scale for Children was translated and validated for use with Slovenian primary school students. The students were also asked about their environmental concerns (using statements from the Environmental Motives Scale) and demographic questions. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the New Ecological Paradigm scale using AMOS software, confirming a three-dimensional model with ten items. The students showed the highest agreement with the items in the factor Rights of Nature and the lowest agreement with Human Exemptionalism. The environmental attitudes of the students decreased from the fourth to the seventh grade, while altruistic environmental concerns significantly increased with higher grades. Gender differences were not statistically significant for environmental worldviews and concerns. The results show that biospheric environmental concern positively correlates with the factors Rights of Nature and belief in Eco-Crisis, and negatively correlates with Human Exemptionalism. The New Ecological Paradigm tool will enable the evaluation of education programmes for children in Slovenia.

The purpose of the fourth paper, by Tatjana Devjak, Irena Janžekovič Žmauc, and Jože Benčina, entitled *The Relationship between the Factors and Conditions of the Autonomy of Preschool Teachers and Fostering the Autonomy of Preschool Children in Kindergarten*, argues that fostering the autonomy of children in kindergarten contributes to the positive effects of the individual's autonomy later in life. Various sources substantiate the assumption that there is a relationship between the child's autonomy and the autonomy of educators. In the paper, how pre-school teachers evaluate the factors of their professional autonomy are identified and investigated, the factors and conditions that, in the pre-school teacher's opinion, foster the autonomy of pre-school children are determined, and whether the assessment of both factors and conditions affects the actual state of the stimulation of the autonomy of children in kindergarten is verified. With regard to fostering the autonomy of children, the participation

of children, enabling them to play and learn and to manipulate materials and teaching aids in their own way, so that pre-school teachers can offer them a choice, take into account their feelings and perspectives, and provide them with rational feedback, is under consideration. The authors concluded that an evaluation of the factors and conditions for fostering the autonomy of children by pre-school teachers has a beneficial effect on fostering such autonomy, but it is not crucial. The most important factors in fostering the autonomy of children are the pre-school teacher as a person and the participation of children.

The next paper, entitled *A Classroom Survey of Language Teachers' Discriminatory Practices against Students: Causes, Consequences and Keys*, by Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd, and Olga Quiñónez Eames, aimed at revealing the incidence of discrimination toward English as a Foreign Language students, the grounds on which it happens, its adverse effects on students as well as potential solutions to it. The data were collected through questionnaires and were further supported by interviews and classroom observations. The participants consisted of sixty-five Iranian students from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The authors report that nearly one-third of the students had experienced discrimination of one form or another. Students' perceptions of discrimination were that it is based on skin colour, age, sex, social class, as well as political and religious beliefs. Furthermore, the findings showed that discrimination was perceived to negatively impact students' motivation and overall ability by adversely affecting their class attendance, sense of responsibility, class performance, and assignment completion. It was found that teachers overtly discriminated against students by openly mocking them, neglecting to call on them for class participation, and unfairly assessing the students and their achievements.

The last paper, by Soňa Grofčíková and Monika Máčajová, with the title *Rhyming in the Context of the Phonological Awareness of Pre-School Children* aims to introduce theoretical starting points and the results of research into children's rhyming in the context of phonological awareness. The text explains theoretical circumstances pertaining to the theme and defines key concepts. The main part of the paper includes the results of the research on pre-school children in Slovakia. There were 866 respondents (children) of four to seven years of age. The research subject was the rhyming skills of children, which was tested in three independent areas: completing the rhyme in a nursery-rhyme, awareness of rhymes, and the production of rhymes.

This CEPSj issue ends with a book review. The review deals with the book entitled *Leadership in Education. Initiatives and trends in selected European countries*, Institute for Educational Research by editors Slavica Ševkušić,

Dušica Malinić, and Jelena Teodorović, published by Institute for Educational Research in Belgrade, Faculty of Education at University of Kragujevac and Hungarian-Netherlands School of Educational Management from University of Szeged (ISBN 978-86-7447-149-4) written by Gábor Halász. It can be summarised from the review that the book presents important issues for all those who are engaged in developing school leadership or planning future initiatives in this area, not only in southern and central Europe but throughout the continent. It is a vital resource for those who design leadership training programmes or any development actions in this area. There is perhaps one element that could have strengthened the potential impact of this book: a substantial synthesis chapter going beyond what the relatively short preface could provide.

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