

Summary

The leading topic for the 7th issue of the *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education* is ***The Quality of Elementary School Education: Teachers' Qualifications and Competences***. I would like to begin the editorial of this issue with a quote: "The school has always been and will be as good as the teacher ... No reform redeems school unless the teacher identifies with it" (Čechová M., 2012. *Řeč o řeči*. [A Talk on Language], Prague: Academia, p. 254).

The generally accepted argument that the interdependence between the quality of education in different types and stages of schools, and the quality of a teacher's expertise, undoubtedly holds true as well for elementary education. The aim of this issue of the *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education* is to enrich the educational science discourse through the discussion of the latest research findings on the relationship between the quality of undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training and the quality of elementary education. The above-mentioned relationship is approached in several ways in this issue.

With respect to the theoretical considerations on the desirable expertise and professional competences of the teacher, it is important to define the key concepts in the first place. The introductory article of this issue (E. Jaszczyszyn, A. Cichocki) provides a theoretical analysis of key concepts like competence and a teacher's qualifications, while confronting several typologies of professional competences. Moreover, the authors present an inspiring perspective on the development of professional competence, especially the "*Four stages of competence*" theory, which carries implications regarding the creation of a teacher's professional development model. According to the authors of this paper, "*there is an urgent need to remodel the teachers' developing system – concentrating on strengthening the potential, present in the idea of professionalization of teachers in terms of teaching standards.*"

The planning of a teacher's professional development cannot fail to correspond to the historical continuity, as well as to the results of a critical analysis of past experience, with respect to a teacher's undergraduate training. The next paper (L. Belášová, M. Portik) thus deals with an analysis of the historical context of elementary school teacher training. Here, the main focus is on the development of undergraduate training in the former Czechoslovakia and Slovakia, especially at the University of Presov in Presov. Based on a comparative analysis of the development of study programs, the paper provides a critical reflection on the findings and a prediction for further development in undergraduate elementary school teacher training.

The importance of undergraduate elementary school teacher training, with respect to ensuring the quality of elementary education, is the topic of the next paper (L. L. Olteanu). The author highlights the role of a teacher's psychological training, mastery of main theories and models of mental development and learning, which is a precondition for the understanding of a child's developmental specifics and individuality.

One of the preconditions that is shaping the quality of elementary education is the developmental level that the child achieves with the help of preschool teachers. In elementary as well as preschool education, the interaction between the teacher and children is considered a vital factor in effective education and a child's development.

The paper, authored by R. Engels-Kritidis, focuses on an analysis of the concept of “good/quality kindergarten teacher”, supported by empirical data. The paper by M. Łobacz develops the issue of school quality and competences with the aspect of social function. The author’s view is that the function of the school is not just to educate, but also to provide support in cases where there is material deprivation of the child. The Social and psychosocial competence of the teacher is of great importance here. The paper by I. Rochovska highlights the need for diagnostic and intervention competence in preschool teachers. Another particular phenomenon in preschool education is educational play as a means of acquiring complex and interdisciplinary knowledge by a child. In her paper, G. Ivanova presents the implementation and the results of the program “*The World in Games*”, while tackling the important professional competence of designing and effectively organizing educational units.

The reviewed publications in this issue point at further aspects of a teacher’s professional competences. An awareness of the latest research findings in the educational sciences plays an essential role in the development of the professional educational competences of elementary school teachers. The publication by D. Klus-Stańska (ed.) that is reviewed in this issue presents the primary research findings in the field of elementary education in Poland. With regard to the teacher’s IT-media competence, the latest didactical challenge is the use of digital geospatial and geo-information technologies (reviewed publication of A. J. Milson, A. Demirci, J. J. Kerski).

This brief outline of papers published in the current thematic issue of the *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education* implies that the concept of a teacher’s professional competences, as well as their acquisition in undergraduate and graduate teacher training, is a dynamic and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Despite national specificity with regard to the extent, structure and curriculum of elementary education, the relationship between the quality of education and the quality of undergraduate training is a universal research topic for basic as well as applied research. Moreover, the universal character of research problems provides space for comparative analyses and the international exchange of expertise, while creating new perspectives in order to strengthen the internationalization of scholarly discourse in the given field of study.

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