

Summary

Modern education has had and is still facing a period of many dynamic changes and the mission of the Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education, as the editor-in-chief put it in the introduction to the first volume, is to “provide readers with comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge about the child’s early education”. Approaches towards education are today experiencing change, including in the sense that instead of transferring information or knowledge, the educators are expected to stimulate in many ways children’s skills and personal development. In order to overcome the economic crisis, the European Union’s education strategy stresses the importance of skills for growth embodied in key competences. This present issue, which includes the research outcomes of education professionals representing four countries (Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary), was devoted to the education context of developing a child’s social and emotional competences. In this volume, Micheala Racheva from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria, probably addresses this topic in the most comprehensive way. She specifies the competencies that children acquire in preschools that are required for school, and the difficulties that arise from the non-equal opportunities or the need for the appropriate measurement of children’s overall development. The author places special stress on the development of communication, and with reference to the current education policy in Bulgaria and the European Union, to the interactive paradigm based on the social and emotional interaction between children and their teachers. Two studies from Poland show how and with what result the social and emotional abilities can be developed by alternative pedagogic programmes. Barbara Surma surveyed the level of school-readiness of five-year-old children attending a kindergarten in Cracow using Maria Montessori’s education system. The number of institutions introducing this method, laying special emphasis on children’s independence and responsibility for their social and material environment, are growing in our region, and the author’s objective, to measure in an exact manner the real outcomes of this pedagogic program, merits special attention. More articles call attention to the fact that words used for describing social and emotional competences are not fully or accurately defined. Education is under constant transition and society requires a school-system to absorb new values and methodologies. In her thought-provoking study Elżbieta Płóciennik seeks to set out a new complex theoretical system, called teaching for wisdom, indicating the challenges modern schools are facing. The article enumerates the advantages of this method, and details how this program finds its links and precedents among the innovators of Polish education. The other three studies approach different areas of education in which social and emotional competences can be fruitfully developed. The Bulgarian authors Lucia Malinova and Bozhidar Angelov in their study present an analysis on how social and emotional competences are developed in children of pre-primary age through the activity of playing. Using the most up-to-date literature, they show how games advance children’s socialization, how their ability for interaction is reflected in these forms of education, and what roles educators can take in order to facilitate the advantageous effect of game-playing. Teachers of the University of Prešov, Iveta Scholtzová and Edita Šimčíková, prepared an interesting article that will enable readers to understand more clearly the cross-curricular correlation of mathematics with other competences. In the authors’ interpretation, mathematics is not a special field of training used typically for developing cognitive abilities, but also a subject which can have a positive impact on the social and emotional aspects of pre-primary and primary school age children’s personalities. They also set out the requirements that teacher-training needs to fulfil in order to raise the level of competence-centred teaching of mathematics. A challenge education must face is the overall

influence of computer technology on children's lives. The Hungarian researchers Ágota Balogh and Erzsébet Lestyán stress its positive effect and show how IT tools can advance differentiated, competence- and motivation-centred education. They verify through a widely extended survey that IT can be an operative tool in children's motivation and that the acute problem of differentiation in schools can be effectively addressed by using modern technology. Emotional and social intelligence, the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups is of special importance with a view to the development of other cognitive skills, and is a really key competence if we would like to ensure the later welfare and prosperity of our children. This is the ability that can only be effectively shaped in early childhood. Our volume will hopefully provide readers with inspiration and ideas to think further the issues related to this extraordinarily pivotal area of education.