

Summary

After having successfully published the first two issues of the *Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education*, which have been widely read, the third issue of the first international academic periodical devoted to issues concerning preschool and elementary school education is now available. While previous issues dealt with contemporary tendencies, problems and difficulties concerning children's education in preschools and elementary schools, the topic of this issue is *Multiculturalism as a Challenge for Contemporary Preschool and Elementary School Education*. There were several reasons as to why the editorial board chose this topic. Members of the editorial board are the citizens of the European Union and its motto is "United in Diversity". The themes of the existence, recognition or preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society have become more and more popular in various fields, including education. The recently formed discipline of multicultural education, which addresses the question of social equality in social context, influences the curricula of pre-primary and primary education in many countries, as well as figuring in the university study programmes preparing preschool and elementary school teachers.

It is not easy to define the concept of multiculturalism as well as multicultural education, because it contains many approaches and perspectives, and the introduction of this journal does not provide enough space to do it. However, in the separate articles, the authors from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia attempt to reflect the topic of multiculturalism as a challenge for contemporary preschool and elementary school education when taking into account these approaches and perspectives. Therefore, this issue brings international insight onto the given topic.

Rozalina Engels-Kritidis from Sofia University, Bulgaria, presents an article entitled *Language Support for Children with a Background of Migration in Early-years Settings in Bavaria with a Focus on Munich*. The author presents the research results of the assessment of migrants' children in terms of the level of their German language prior to school entry. She claims that the active language learning support of migrants' children should begin much earlier than is currently the case.

Martin Kaleja from Ostrava University, the Czech Republic, deals with the major problem that human society has still not reached, in terms of its development, social equality. His article is mainly about the topic of social equality, and in it he defines the basic terminology, clarifies the issue in the context of the reduction of prejudices and stereotypes, and emphasizes the importance of the development of processes and mechanisms for social equality for supporting humanity in human beings.

Werona Król from the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland, discusses five dimensions of multicultural education established by Bank, who is widely regarded as the founder of multicultural education. The author also shares some ideas as to how these dimensions are or can be used to assist teachers in integrating multicultural content into their primary foreign language classrooms.

Multiculturalism in preschools and elementary schools as a new challenge in institutional education is the topic with which Imre Lipcsei from Szent Istvan University, deals. He mentions that the social and cultural environment of kindergartens and schools have undergone

considerable changes during the past few decades, in the sense that these schools are attended by children with a wide range of economic, cultural and family backgrounds. This requires an acceptance of diversity (different religions, traditions, customs etc.) and this diversity requires new competences from teachers.

In her article, Alica Petrasová from the University of Presov, Slovak Republic, emphasises the role of cooperative teaching and learning in creating an inclusive and interactive classroom. According to the author, cooperative learning groups encourage positive social interaction among students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. She also claims that students who are taught in this way have great potential to facilitate the building of cross-ethnic friendships and to reduce racial stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice.

The text written by Iwona Samborska, from the University of Bielsko-Biala, Poland, points to the problem of creating an identity in a culturally diverse space. She asked two important questions related to the topic: What is the importance of the everyday experience of a six-year old child in creating its identity? To what extent is a six-year old conscious of its embodied and rooted experience? The obtained answers by 94 six-year old children in an urban environment enabled the identification of three groups of experiences of children situated in the individually constructed, as well as the culturally and socially confirmed locale.

Ekaterina Sofronieva's article summarizes professionals' opinions about if and when small children should start learning a new/foreign language. Due to the indisputable benefits of early language learning, it is essential that teachers are trained who can provide this instruction. Therefore, the author writes about degree programmes in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria, providing combined expertise both in language teaching and early year's pedagogy.

The title of the article written by Barbara Surma from the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, Poland, is From Regional to Intercultural Education in Polish Kindergartens. The author reflects on the assumptions of intercultural education in kindergartens as well as the direction of changes in regional and intercultural kindergarten education in Poland. She claims that although the phenomenon of multiculturalism and interculturalism has been slightly emphasized in the current national curriculum, it does not take into account Polish kindergartens.

The final article is about fostering tolerance in pupils. The author, Mária Vargová from the Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovak Republic, asked this question and she tried to answer it in the article dealing with the application of multicultural education at schools. She characterises multicultural education as a cross-cutting theme in the state educational programme ISCED 1 – primary education. She emphasises that it is important that teachers don't have prejudices against any ethnic group or nationality and they should also use the appropriate methods to foster tolerance in pupils.

It is clear that the authors provide solutions in relation to the issue of multiculturalism in contemporary preschool and elementary school education from various viewpoints, they reflect and analyse the current state of affairs, present conclusions on the basis of survey results, and propose possible ways to improve the current situation. The authors have attempted to contribute solutions to various aspects of this topic and we hope their work will become the starting point in the future when dealing with the issues of multiculturalism and multicultural education within preschool and elementary school education.

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