

## Editorial

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A priority of the European Union is promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship yet this cannot be achieved without the integration of children with special needs into public education. The process of special education involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and their community. Giftedness is also a difference in learning and can also benefit from specialized teaching techniques or different educational programs. To help to give an idea of the recent achievements in this field, the eighth issue of the "Journal of Preschool and Elementary School focuses on *"inclusiveness in preschool and elementary school education as a space for diversity"*.

The article of Rozalina Engels-Kritidis (Sofia University, Bulgaria) provides useful insights and contributes to the arguments in favour of an individualised approach in preschool education with the presentation of research that was carried out for 12 weeks with the participation of experimental groups of 61, and control groups of 63 children. The study confirms that the individualized and differentiated approach has a measurably positive effect on preschool-age 3–4 and 6–7 old children.

Monika Krajčovičová and Erika Novotná's paper presents a broad overview of the characteristics of children and families with refugee backgrounds, and provides strategies and practical suggestions as to how educational institutions in Australia can provide the best support for members of such communities in order to achieve their successful inclusion into formal schooling by creating culturally inclusive, safe and supportive learning environments. The topic is particularly relevant as more and more families with refugee backgrounds need to be catered for in an increasing number of countries in the world today. The paper confirms

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that the education system in Australia has already prepared for the challenge of the increased diversity and special needs that the inclusion of children with often traumatic backgrounds and experiences might pose to teachers and schools. The purpose of the paper is to provide an overview of the government initiatives, a thorough presentation of the needs and backgrounds of these families and recommendations to teachers and educational institutions with regard how to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment.

The Hungarian authors (Krisztina Katona, Attila B. Kis) focus on issues in first language acquisition: problems that might arise in the process of access to the mother-tongue, factors that may hinder the acquisition of the first language, as well as the symptoms that children can exhibit if linguistic communication is hindered. The paper explores the Hungarian context and emphasizes the importance of successful first language acquisition for integration into wider social groups and communities, including schools. The other focus of the article is the ways in which pre-school teachers can assess the levels of first language competence in children: some measurement tools and tests are presented and discussed.

The Polish researchers Iwona Lewkowicz and Elżbieta Jaszczyszyn are concerned with the issue of inclusion of children with special educational needs in pre-school and primary school education in Poland. The article summarises the legal acts treating disability, and reviews the handling of this issue by Polish law and discusses the applications of inclusive education in pre-school and primary education. The authors also outline the implications of inclusive education to teacher education and raise greater awareness to the importance of inclusion and equal opportunities to all in education.

Anna M. Manowska (Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow) presents the background and results of a research project in the area of the use of drama and Kolb's learning cycle in the education of children aged 6–10, based on an enquiry carried out with students studying for a Master's degree in education. The chosen topic is relevant and valuable as it represents the innovatory approach of using drama to encourage children to acquire correct behaviour toward children with special needs,

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which is less widely used in Eastern European contexts. The author comprehensively presents the background and history of the use of drama in Polish education, and argues in favour of the Kolb cycle effectively and convincingly.

Austrian professors Bernd Traxl and Johannes Huber (Innsbruck) focus on the issue of the need for more male role models in educational processes. The choice of the topic is an important and relevant one, due to the need for more empirical research on the gender aspects of child development. The paper describes a research project carried out with 10 groups of pre-school age children in Austria. The day-to-day activities of these groups were observed systematically while five groups worked with mixed-gender staff and five with all-female staff. The paper clearly suggests that the lack of male teachers is unfavourable for boys and boys can be "led into a more inviting and less confrontational situation more easily by male staff."

There are detailed reports prepared by committed participants in our present issue on exciting international conferences held in 2015 as well. Three of them were organized in Poland: one in the circle of "Speech, Language and Communication" in Kielce, the other in Poznan with the title "Values and Meaning of Life", the third one with the meaningful title "Thinking Symbols" in Pułtusk. The fourth European conference, an annual meeting of experts of developmental psychology, was held in Braga, Portugal in July. Through the extensive accounts we can have a deep insight into the conference topics even if we did not have the chance to participate at the events in person. It is also very exciting to have an overview of the current special books to which we might have no access e.g. due to poor command of a given language. Our Polish colleagues help us with reviews of up-to-date publications in the field of sociotherapy and educational reform in Poland.

The editors hope that the volume gives readers inspiration for new research, useful best practices and ideas to ponder with regard the pivotal topics of inclusiveness.

Attila B. Kis