

Editorial

The second issue of the third volume of the *CEPS Journal* focuses on the school and its environment. A wide range of topics can fit into this domain, as each school is embedded in its social context on many levels. The social and cultural aspects of the broader and direct environment influence the function and operation of school in terms of pedagogical, material and cultural sources, as well as in the sense of social capital and value, experiential, linguistic and other support to students.

Families of children and youngsters attending a particular school have the most important impact on that school. The whole array of experiences that children have in their families and within their neighbourhoods are also brought to school, and vice versa. All of the other institutions in the local community of a particular school are also influential. The quality of the interactions within schools, and the interactions of schools with their surroundings, can be understood as a process of interplay and co-creation. Adequate education means a balance between individual, social and economic aspects.

The purpose of this thematic edition is to encourage reflection on the various aspects of influences and exchanges on the axis social environment-school, to analyse mutual influences and to present practices that link schools with their local community.

With the selection of this theme, and with the associated papers, we would like to stimulate discussion on the various aspects that colour and determine relationships between schools and their environments.

In their papers, seven authors from Austria, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia discuss different aspects of this sustainable interplay.

The first paper in the thematic section of the present issue has been prepared by Sunčica Macura-Milovanović and is entitled “*Pre-Primary Education of Roma Children in Serbia: Barriers and Possibilities*”. The content of the article makes us aware of current obstacles to Roma children regarding preschool education in Serbia. Roma children are still disadvantaged in their growth in many countries. They are also under-represented in Serbian kindergartens, even they grow up in extremely deprived conditions and would therefore benefit greatly from inclusion, as it is well known that the early integration of children into preschool education stimulates and improves their psychosocial growth. The paper analyses the main barriers to the access of Roma children in the system of pre-primary education, as well as discussing possible ways to overcome these barriers. As a transitional solution, the author proposes comprehensive community-based programmes that could contribute to better care for young

Roma children prior to their inclusion in integrative/desegregated programmes in preschool institutions.

The second paper, entitled “*School and the Cultural-Heritage Environment: Pedagogical, Creative and Artistic Aspects*” has been prepared by Hicela Ivon and Dubravka Kuščević. Attention is drawn to new ways and concrete opportunities to integrate the cultural-heritage environment into school education using a ‘learning-centred teaching’ approach. The authors advocate the idea that learning, both in and out of school, is a cultural act, and that students can, with the help of teachers and other important adults, develop and adjust their behaviour and lifestyle to their cultural milieu. They introduce an integrative approach to learning and teaching – Terhart’s (2001) concept of ‘learning-centred teaching’ – that links cognitive, social and moral aspects. In the second part of the paper, the relationship between school and its cultural-heritage environment is discussed from the creative perspective and from the perspective of art. Through artistic expression when learning about the cultural-heritage and natural school environment, the paper illustrates the active learning of students and their identity development, as well as their acquisition of sensitivity towards the arts.

The third article has been prepared by three authors – Renata Miljević-Ridički, Tea Pahić and Marija Šarić – and is entitled “*A Croatian Study of Practitioners’ and Kindergarten Teacher Students’ Opinions of their Role in Children’s Lives*”. It deals with the preschool period, providing insight into practitioners’ and kindergarten teacher students’ perceptions of and attitudes towards their work by analysing the answers of 69 practitioners and 65 first-year university kindergarten teacher students to the incomplete sentences: “*Children are like... because ...*” and “*Kindergarten teachers are like... because...*”. The authors determine that students and kindergarten teachers perceive children in a very positive way and evaluate their present and future occupation as highly valuable. The greatest difference between the two groups of interviewees occurs in their perception of working conditions, with students displaying a more idealistic approach.

The fourth paper, written by Arijana Mataga Tintor, bears the title “*Community Resilience and the Fulfilment of Child Rights in the Family, School and Community*”. The central topic is the experience of researching the resilience of the local community and the fulfilment of child rights, focusing particularly on the right to participate. The local community of Velika Gorica was chosen for the study, with qualitative data being collected through interviews in seven focus groups in which children, parents and teachers took part. The concept of resilience produced ambiguous reactions among children, parents and teachers,

being perceived in two ways: as “positive” and “negative”. All three groups of respondents (children, parents and teachers) agree that there is a connection between child rights and resilience, and that the relationship is conditioned by interaction.

Dejana Bouillet’s contribution, the fifth paper in this thematic edition, deals with the theme of inclusive education: “*Some Aspects of Collaboration in Inclusive Education – Teachers’ Experiences*”. The author has devoted special attention to the resources of professional support available to teachers in Croatia, as well as to investigating teachers’ views on the content and usefulness of this support. The results highlight several problems: in both the organisation and definition of collaborative work in inclusive education, in the small number of professionals available to support teachers and students in this process, and in the lack of collaboration between schools and professionals in local communities in Croatia. With these findings, the paper emphasises the importance of the cooperation of the school with the local community.

The sixth paper has been written by Arno Heimgartner and Stephan Sting. Entitled “*The Establishment of School Social Work in Austria – From a Project to a Regular Offer*”, it introduces the present situation and the basic challenges of school social work in Austria. The article is based on empirical studies carried out by two universities (Klagenfurt and Graz), including the views of “pupils”, “teachers” and “parents” on the theme. The analysis characterises school social work as a multi-thematic service (covering areas such as conflicts, love, problems at school, and problems of the family) that must oppose reduction to single problem areas such as drug abuse or violence. Structural analyses expose the significance of spatial conditions and the competence of personnel, as well as the social-spatial network.

The last thematic paper, prepared by Metka Kuhar and Herwig Reiter, deals with the theme of parental authority and is entitled “*Towards a Concept of Parental Authority in Adolescence*”. The author claims that the notion of ‘parental authority’ remains largely unspecified. The goal of the paper is therefore to undertake a critical review of conceptualisations of parental authority in some selected developmental-psychological approaches. The author identifies the absence of an explicit and integrated theoretical and empirical conceptualisation of parental authority, as well as a certain lack of consistency in the application of the concept, and suggests some initial steps towards a concept of parental authority as relational, dynamic and co-constituted in the sense of a joint product and outcome of family relationships.

The final paper, prepared by Marianne Juntunen, located in the Varia section, deals with an issue that also has a certain connection with the

environment: “Life-Cycle Thinking in Inquiry-Based Sustainability Education – Effects on Students’ Attitudes towards Chemistry and Environmental Literacy”. The aim of the study is to improve the quality of students’ environmental literacy and sustainability education in chemistry teaching by combining the socio-scientific issue of life-cycle thinking with inquiry-based learning approaches. The case study presents results from an inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project: an interdisciplinary teaching model designed by chemistry teachers. The study shows that the project positively affected students’ attitudes towards chemistry learning. There were evident changes in the environmental literacy of the students, who emphasised the importance of environmental protection and recycling, but perceived that changing their own behaviour is still difficult. The paper emphasises that inquiry-based teaching in interdisciplinary environmental education can be an effective approach to motivating secondary school students to learn chemistry, as well as offering teachers an opportunity to design chemistry lessons comprising sustainable development principles.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this editorial, the scope of the topics in the domain school and the environment can be illustrated from various perspectives. The papers presented open and discuss some of these perspectives, providing us with certain insights and data on these complex relationships.

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