

Editorial

Dear Reader

This issue of Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal brings us articles covering different areas of education, its challenges, and its practices. A relatively diverse content of discussion as well as assorted pedagogic practices reflected in the articles invites readers to a genuinely comparative journey in the education of our times. Durkheim would claim that they reflect the diverse concepts, interests, and investments in education in areas from pre-primary education, curricula questions, the role of visual art in and all the way to an investigation of cheating as a type of rationality in upper-secondary education in Slovenia and responses to compliments in language teaching in Iran. The spectrum covered by the issue is obviously wide, both in terms of content and geography.

Education is today, as it was in the times of Durkheim, obviously not the only agent of education in its environment but, as we know all too well also an arena structured by guiding principles of our pedagogical ideas, concepts and wider social rationalities.

In the first article, entitled *Preschool Teaching Staff's Opinions on the Importance of Preschool Curricular Fields of Activities, Art Genres and Visual Arts Fields*, authors Tomaž Zupančič, Branka Čagran and Matjaž Mulej present preschool teachers' and assistant teachers' opinions on the importance of selected fields of educational work in kindergartens. The article first highlights the importance of activities expressing artistic creativity within modern curriculums and then presents an empirical study that examines the preschool teachers' and assistant teachers' opinions on the importance of the educational fields, art genres, and visual arts fields. In their research hypotheses, the authors have presumed that preschool teachers find individual educational fields, individual art genres, and individual visual arts activities to be of different importance and thus stress some of them. In their research, they have demonstrated that the greatest importance in lived curriculum in Slovenia is attributed to movement and language, followed by nature, society, art, and mathematics. At the same time, within art genres, the greatest importance is attributed to visual arts and music and the least to audio-visual activities.

In the second article, authored by Janja Batič and Dragica Haramija and entitled *The Importance of Visual Reading for the Interpretation of a Literary Text*, the results of a research survey on the role of illustrations in the interpretation of literary texts are presented. The survey sample included students of primary education and preschool education, who were given the poem *Učenjak*

(Scholar) by Niko Grafenauer and asked to answer questions regarding the character's personality and appearance, the literary space, and other elements. The first group of interviewees was given the poem illustrated by Lidija Osterc and the second the same poem illustrated by Marjan Manček. The results of the research show that the illustration had a significant impact on the message conveyed by the poem, particularly when the illustrator added a context by presenting the character's environment (that was not explicitly given in the text). Moreover, the results demonstrated the need for the comprehensive reading of illustrated text, given that it is the interaction between the verbal and the visual that provides vital information necessary for the reader to understand the message of the literary work.

The third article is titled *Opportunity Makes the Cheater: High School Students and Academic Dishonesty*. Authors Andrej Šorgo, Marija Vavdi, Urška Cigler and Marko Kralj present the results of their research of cheating behaviour in Slovenian upper secondary schools. Their stated aim is to raise awareness of it and to lower the tolerance of such behaviour. To acquire information about it and opinions on such behaviour, they have compiled a questionnaire that targeted a university population of first-year students (N=323). The results revealed that cheating is treated as an acceptable practice in the schools in Slovenia, and almost all students at least occasionally indulge in some kind of academic misbehaviour. It seems that a culture tolerant or even supportive of such behaviour has been established among students, parents, and teachers, all working together to "help" students climb the ladder of "success". Cheating is most common in homework, but at the other end, even systems such as external exams are, in the eyes of students and authors, not immune to fraud.

The Use of Compliment Response Strategies among Iranian Learners of English: Researching Interlocutors' Relative Power and Gender, authored by Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd, reports on a study that investigated how Iranian EFL learners respond to compliments in English. The data collected by means of a discourse completion task (DCT) in a variety of situations that required the participants, 26 EFL learners (13 males and 13 females) to respond to compliments directed at them. The analysed (qualitatively and quantitatively) results indicated that, regardless of gender and power, the first three most frequent CR strategies were 'Acceptance', 'Combination' and 'Amendment'. These findings were then analysed in light of previous similar studies that revealed that the participants had followed their first cultural norms not only in using the strategies mentioned above but also in employing such strategies as 'Face Relationship', 'No acknowledgment' and 'Nonacceptance' very infrequently. Furthermore, study shows that males used more CR strategies compared to females.

The qualitative analysis of the semantic formulas of the CR strategies revealed that, by accepting a compliment, Iranian EFL learners sought agreement and consequently relied on positive politeness to foster rapport and solidarity.

In the article *Introducing Teacher Mentoring in Kosovo Schools – Potential and Challenges for Sustainability*, authors Eda Vula, Fatlume Berisha and Blerim Saqipi present the study that examined the lessons learned from the introduction of a teacher mentoring culture within a teacher professional development program in selected pilot schools in Kosovo. Four mentor teachers and four mentee focus groups were involved in the open interviews, and their portfolios were also examined. The results identified the important themes in terms of developing a school mentoring culture in a system that had lacked mentoring practices and was embarking on an ambitious curricular reform. The study revealed that the individual, collegial, and institutional dimensions are critical for the formation of a mentoring culture.

In the article, *Teachers' Attitudes towards Behaviour Patterns in Social Conflicts in Primorsko-Goranska County in Croatia*, authors Nataša Vlah, Lucija Jančec and Renata Čepić aim to research primary school teachers' attitudes towards behaviour patterns in social conflict. The authors see teachers' attitudes as particularly important while the primary school teacher is the role model for his/her pupils. In their research, they have applied a scale of attitudes toward social conflicts (Tatalović Vorkapić & Vlah, Mejovšek, 2012) to a stratified sample of 155 teachers in the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Croatia, measuring three patterns of behaviour: avoidance/adaptation, cooperation, and winning. According to the results, the teachers most frequently have positive attitudes toward a pattern of cooperation, and most seldom toward a pattern of winning. The winning pattern is negatively correlated with cooperation and positively correlated with avoidance/adaptation. In the conclusions, authors recommended systematic social skills training with the aim to raise the ability for managing conflict for a specific group of teachers.

Rajka Bračun Sova in the article *Art Appreciation as a Learned Competence: A Museum-based Qualitative Study of Adult Art Specialist and Art Non-Specialist Visitors* presents the results of her qualitative study that examined art appreciation by exploring two different groups of museum visitors: art specialists and art non-specialists. She conducted her research at Moderna galerija in Ljubljana. Twenty-three adults were recruited and accompanied during their visit to the museum. Participants were requested to “think out loud”, which meant to talk about what they saw, thought, and felt about the artworks. There was a short interview conducted with each participant before entering the museum to gain insight into their art-related and museum-visiting experience.

The analysis of the data revealed that some processes of art appreciation were similar within the two groups. Both art specialists and non-specialists interact with museum objects physically and intellectually; they see the contents and formal qualities of the museum objects as a whole; they respond emotionally to artworks; appreciation includes their personal experience, and they search museum interpretation/information for their understanding. Some notable differences were also found. Art specialists respond to artworks with more understanding and are willing to put more effort into art appreciation, whereas art non-specialists respond with less understanding and put less effort into art appreciation. The paper focuses on the differences between the two groups; reflective and spontaneous appreciation of art, objective and subjective appreciation of art and the effort put into art appreciation. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications of the study for the teaching of art and museum education.

The current issue ends with a review of a book authored by Branka Baranović and her group of researchers from the Centre for the Study and Development of Education, Institute for Social Issues in Zagreb. The book is entitled: *Koji srednjoškcolci namjeravaju studirati? - Pristup visokom obrazovanju i odabir studija* [What Do High School Students Plan to Study? - Access to Higher Education and Choice of Study]. The review of the book concludes with “[T]he research in question, the Croatian scientific community and political subsystem have gained a well-conceptualised and empirically supported interdisciplinary study of one of the most relevant questions of the present and future in Croatia as well as in Europe.”

SLAVKO GABER