

## EDITORIAL

This issue of *Studia paedagogica* can be considered very significant in the history of the journal. The reason is that for the first time it is published in English. So far we have targeted our journal at a Czech readership, while maintaining the ambition to present interesting authors from abroad whose articles have been translated into Czech. In a certain way we thus helped to establish contacts between foreign countries and Czech readers. Recently a decision was taken to develop and strengthen this intention: we will continue publishing three issues a year in Czech, presenting articles by local authors as well as translations of the work of foreign contributors, but, besides that, we will prepare one English issue every year, again with articles of foreign and home origin.

*Studia paedagogica* will therefore go beyond its hitherto national framework and be given an international dimension. On the one hand, we will present our readers with more articles from abroad; on the other, Czech authors, many of whom produce remarkable scientific results, will have the opportunity to be heard in a wider professional arena. The journal now publishes full versions of the articles in each edition on its website. Also, it is integrated into a variety of databases offering access to full articles to foreign readers.

We wish our journal to be a source of knowledge to professionals in educational sciences no matter where in the world they work on their theoretical or empirical problems. Such a goal can only be fulfilled if today's scientific *lingua Franca*—English—is used.

This international pilot issue opens with an article by Israeli authors Adam Lefstein, Mirit Israeli, Itay Pollak and Maya Bozo-Schwartz, who present dilemmas faced by a primary school teacher promoting procedures of so-called dialogic pedagogy, which is teaching that makes heavy demands on cognition and active communication on the part of pupils. The study by Lefstein and his colleagues demonstrates that this kind of teaching may result in a number of unintentional and frequently contradictory effects. The authors show a plastic picture of the situation of a teacher as a human being constantly forced to choose new ways and simultaneously consider the possible impacts of the steps he or she has taken.

The article is especially inspiring for Czech readers as the concept of dialogic teaching (cf. Alexander, 2008) is promoted as a part of the current theoretical discourse in education. A study which points out potential

contradictions in the application of this concept of teaching is thus valuable. For the broader international community, the enriching benefit of this article is the emphasis it places on the elimination of the separation between educational research and real practice in classrooms. The procedure the authors have opted for is simple and at the same time somewhat provocative: instead of opening with a definition of key theoretical issues, they record a real classroom event, which is then described in detail. Only then do they proceed to the theorisation of the phenomena they have observed. As the authors themselves say, they have given up inventing some theorisation “hook” upon which to hang the analysis. They believe that the procedure they have chosen makes it easier to capture the richness and complexity of classroom practice.

The following article, by Dana Kasperová, offers a powerful reading experience. Kasperová, a Czech author, presents the results of a historic survey in which she studied surviving reports by educators who worked in the Jewish ghetto of Theresienstadt, which was established during World War II on the territory of today’s Czech Republic. The study is an attempt to explore extreme conditions for education. It is evident that even in a situation completely deprived of basic attributes of humanity, Theresienstadt’s adults did not give up their responsibility for the education of the next generation and were able to attend to their instruction and upbringing.

Apart from showing the admirable heroism with which these people strove to construct an elaborate educational system in uncertain and entirely temporary conditions, Dana Kasperová’s article can be interpreted as a claim that education represents a certain anthropological invariable present in one form or another in any human community. Under the conditions of the ghetto of Theresienstadt, education was a tool for the transmission of moral principles and the offsetting of the loss of respect and humanity.

For those interested in qualitative research methodology, Michael Schratz, Johanna F. Schwarz and Tanja Westfall-Greiter present a report on phenomenologically conceived original vignette research of students’ learning experiences in the classroom. The authors of this article show how difficult but necessary it is to explore teaching and learning simultaneously. They urge us to perceive both sides of this coin and take into account the entangled relations between teachers and students in these processes. Learning is understood by these authors as an experience, not a product of experience, and it is this experience that they wish to capture by means of so-called vignettes, i.e., condensed descriptions of events recorded by the researcher in the way she or he believes they have occurred. Based on an example of a vignette describing a respondent’s learning, Schratz and his colleagues demonstrate a particular situation in which the respondent was probably teaching mathematics but, first of all, was learning how to protect herself in

a situation she was struggling to comprehend and where students were applying pressure on her. This addresses the question of the degree to which formalised learning at school is an actual learning experience for the learner. The vignette research, first developed by the authors for lower secondary schools and later applied to teacher education, is an original continuation of the longstanding research and development endeavors of the Innsbruck school led by Michael Schratz, who returns to the Czech educational scene after a number of other publications in the last two decades.

Although the research into organisational learning in schools as carried out by a team of Brno-based researchers led by Milan Pol is quite well known in the Czech milieu, the article by Martin Sedláček and his colleagues offers the foreign community of researchers an opportunity to get acquainted with some of its results. The authors understand organisational learning as a comprehensive process comprising acquirement, creation and sharing of knowledge used in the life of schools. In this study, they show what influence on the systematic way of organisational learning in Czech schools is exerted by their internal arrangement. As relevant factors they deal with vision, cooperation, material and organisational conditions, external support, individual attitudes and school leadership. Data of a representative survey in two Regions of the Czech Republic are used for the study, which involves more than one thousand teachers and more than fifty schools. Perhaps the most important of the authors' results is the confirmation of the essential impact of the factor of a coherent and shared vision in the school: people in schools tend to learn in an unsystematic or intuitive manner if they do not understand where these processes should lead.

This article strives to reveal what takes place in Czech schools which have been given considerable autonomy and are supposed to use it purposefully (with little noticeable external support, regrettably) and boost school development from the inside while maintaining its momentum for the benefit of the quality of learning and teaching.

The team of Kateřina Vlčková, Janek Berger and Manuel Völkle, which has carried out a comparison of common taxonomies of foreign language learning strategies, resonates excellently with the spirit of this issue. Vlčková works in Brno while Berger and Völkle work in Berlin, so it is a truly international team. Their article is a testimony to how the professional community cumulates concepts, findings and theories in order to subject them to thorough examination and verify or refute them. In this way, Kateřina Vlčková and her German colleagues have approached the frequently used taxonomy of foreign language learning strategies designed by Oxford (1990) and cast doubt on its functionality by an elaborate statistical analysis of empirical data from Czech schools. Since the purpose of a critical approach to science is not only the destruction and demolition of the known but also revision and suggestions

for new approaches and solutions, the authors conclude their article by identifying better ways to assess foreign learning strategies in future research. Similarly to the contribution by Adam Lefstein et al., this study thematises the border between research and practice, as according to the authors the taxonomy criticised corresponds well to the needs of immediate teaching practice but not to the demands of scientific research. It is therefore one more example of the polyphony of voices of practice and research.

The final article, by Patricie Mertova, provides information interesting for educational communities both in the Czech Republic and abroad. It deals with a senior academic's views on internationalisation in the Czech, English and Australian higher education systems. Using the method of narrative inquiry, Mertova draws out general and culture-specific aspects of internationalisation highlighted in critical events described by academics. Mertova's article concludes this internationally conceived issue of the journal in a symbolic way: a Czech-born professional, she works abroad and compares phenomena at universities in the Czech Republic and abroad.

The range of papers collected in this issue is manifold in terms of methodology, with qualitative (Lefstein et al., Schratz et al.) and quantitative (Sedláček et al., Vlčková et al., Mertova) approaches and historical research (Kasperová) represented. There is a large variety of subjects, despite all the articles focusing on the processes of institutionalised education and its actors. They refer to various types of educational institutions, from primary schools to universities, including a school operating under the extreme conditions of a war-time ghetto, in which there are still and always the same two groups of actors: teachers and students. Some of the studies collected in this issue explore the situation of teachers (Lefstein et al., Kasperová, Sedláček et al., Mertova) while others are primarily focused on students (Schratz et al., Vlčková et al.). However, as shown convincingly by Schratz et al. in particular, the actions of teachers and students are interconnected and mutually conditioned, so the existence of the former is impossible without the latter.

We believe that all these studies have the potential to enhance thought on educational phenomena. We have enjoyed preparing our first international issue and hope our pleasure will be shared by our readers. We wish all our supporters, Czech and non-Czech alike, pleasant reading.

*Klára Šedřová, Milan Pol*

## References

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