

## **ZDOLNOŚCI UCZNIÓW / UCZNIOWIE ZDOLNI – EDUKACYJNA WARTOŚĆ CZY NIECHCIANY PROBLEM SZKOŁY?**

### **STUDENTS' ABILITIES / ABLE STUDENTS – EDUCATIONAL VALUE OR UNWANTED PROBLEM AT SCHOOL?**

#### **Od Redakcji**

Oddajemy do rąk Państwa kolejny numer „Problemów Wczesnej Edukacji”, tym razem poświęcony tematowi: „Zdolności uczniów / uczniowie zdolni – edukacyjna wartość czy niechciany problem szkoły?”. Ta problematyka należy z pewnością do najważniejszych w obszarze teorii i praktyki szkoły. Choć zainteresowanie tym polem zagadnień systematycznie rośnie, jednak wciąż jest niewspółmiernie niskie w stosunku do wagi problemu. Jest to temat ważny społecznie i pedagogicznie, ale – wbrew powszechnemu mniemaniu - dyskusyjny i niejednoznaczny.

Hasła „uczeń zdolny” i „zdolności uczniów”, choć powinny wywoływać pozytywne konotacje i wspierające działania nauczycieli, nie radują tak bardzo pedagogów, wprawiając ich często w zakłopotanie, a nawet wywołując opór. Związane jest to, niewątpliwie, z brakiem odpowiedniego przygotowania nauczycieli do rozwijania zdolności uczniów, zwłaszcza tych wybitnych, z niechęcią do podejmowania dodatkowych, nieschematycznych działań i zabiegów edukacyjnych, a niekiedy wynika po prostu ze zwykłej tęsknoty za „świętym spokojem”.

Z drugiej strony, zagadnienie kształcenia uczniów zdolnych nie jest neutralne politycznie i ekonomicznie, wiąże się z mechanizmami selekcji, kulturowego dziedziczenia i hierarchizacji społecznej. Rozwiązania w tym zakresie są zawsze wyrazem wyborów między wizją egalitarnego i elitarnego społeczeństwa, a więc z natury rzeczy są właśnie polityczne. Ścieżki dla uczniów zdolnych oraz pozaszkolne wspieranie zdolności wywołują kontrowersje emancypacyjne - jedni widzą w nich drogę emancypacji tych zdolnych, inni zagrożenie dla emancypacji pozostałych.

Do udziału w numerze udało się zaprosić specjalistów nie tylko z zakresu pedagogiki twórczości, ale także socjologii edukacji i psychologii. Międzynarodowy skład Autorów, w tym przedstawiciele ECHA (European Council for High Ability) jest dodatkowym gwarantem poszerzonego kontekstu analiz.

Mamy nadzieję, że prezentowane teksty zachęcą Czytelników do krytycznej refleksji, świadomego opowiedzenia się za określoną argumentacją i poszukiwania własnych rozwiązań.

## **Editorial**

This is the next issue of "Problems of Early Education", this time devoted to the theme: "Pupils' Giftedness / Gifted Pupils: an Educational Value or an Unwanted School Problem". This issue is certainly among the most important ones in the area of school theory and practice. Although interest in this field of issues is constantly growing, it is still disproportionately low in relation to the seriousness of the problem. It is a sociologically and pedagogically important problem, but - contrary to the common opinion - debatable and ambiguous.

Although the notions "gifted pupil" and "pupils' giftedness," should produce positive connotations and support teachers' activities, they do not make teachers happy, on the contrary, they often put them in trouble, and even cause resistance. This is, no doubt, connected with a lack of adequate preparation of teachers to develop pupils' giftedness, especially the outstanding ones, with reluctance to take additional non-schematic educational activities, and sometimes it simply arises from the common longing for "peace and quiet." On the other hand, the issue of educating gifted pupils is not politically or economically neutral, it is connected with the selection mechanisms, cultural inheritance and social hierarchy. Solutions in this area are always an expression of choice between the egalitarian and elitist vision of society and, hence, they are political in nature. Paths for gifted pupils and out-of-school support of giftedness provoke emancipatory controversies - some see in them a way for emancipation of the gifted, others a threat to the emancipation of others.

We were fortunate to invite to this issue experts not only in pedagogy of creativity, but also in sociology of education and psychology. The international composition of authors, including representatives of ECHA (European Council for High Ability) is an additional guarantee of a broadened context for analysis.

We hope that the texts presented will encourage the Readers to a critical reflexion, a conscious support of a definite argument and seeking their own solutions.

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## **ABSTRAKTY**

*Zbyszko Melosik*

### **Meritocratic education and social constructions of success in life**

The author of this article focuses on an analysis of the relationship between education and success in life. First, he describes a meritocratic vision of social reality with strong emphasis on social competition and individualism. Here, the role of individual's talents and hard work is considered the most important factor in achieving a good academic diploma and ultimately a high social position and material prosperity. Then, the assumptions of credentialism proponents are analyzed, including the social reproduction argument. Finally, the Author confronts his previous discussion with the Polish educational reality.

*Joan Freeman*

### **Emotional aspects of growing up gifted**

The gifted and talented are no more and no less emotionally well balanced than any other children. But they can face special emotional challenges because of their differentness. The expectations they face, for example, can be contradictory and confusing.

Whereas some people see them as destined to suffer poor social relationships others look to them as natural leaders. Teachers and parents may pressure pupils to reach a constant high level of production in everything they do - including advanced maturity. The most important ways of easing of such a pressured situation for the gifted comes from being with others of the same age and similar ability, honest communication from parents and teachers, the opportunity to follow their own interests, and acceptance as individuals.

*Wiesława Limont*

### **Education towards leadership in creativity**

Education of gifted students is connected with adequate educational syllabi and strategies but, foremost, with the teachers of gifted students; teachers who can identify and develop the talents of their students. This paper presents the results of empirical research demonstrating that the teacher of the gifted student shows specific personality traits and different styles of functioning and teaching. Similarly there is offered a closer look at the concept of the teacher as a master, who is a model to be followed by his students, and the mentor and guide, leading his students towards leadership in creativity.

*Krzysztof Szmidt*

### **The anti-creative attitudes of students, including gifted students**

The article characterizes briefly some barriers to student creativity and creative attitudes. Barriers are blocks, internal or external, that either inhibit creative thinking or prevent innovative ideas. Most barriers result from learning. They may originate with peers, the educational environment and traditional teaching methods. Some are perceptual barriers (stereotyping, the inability to see problems from various viewpoints) some are emotional (fear of new experience, fear of taking risks, the inability to be gratified / the **inability to late gratification**, sense of awe at masterpieces – E.P. Torrance) or social barriers (peer sanctions, group ostracism, taboos, a malicious sense of humor, pseudo-originality). Every block destroys creative imagination and innovative action in the classroom. The author hopes that creative teaching and teaching creativity can overcome these mental and social blocks.

*Maria Ledzińska*

### **Facts and myths about gifted pupils: an attempted reflexion**

The issue of giftedness occupies a prominent place in psychology and is developed in the context of various theoretical strands, among which the differential, developmental, and cognitive studies are dominant. An application of major statements, in turn, is the domain of educational psychology and related disciplines, especially pedagogy. A discussion about giftedness is also conducted by teachers and parents, solving various educational and didactic problems in their daily lives. The key assumption of this article is a statement that a common understanding of giftedness is full of myths and beliefs construed as inconsistent with the current state of knowledge. Some of them are indicated in this essay, drawing attention to the adverse effects of their presence in the minds and behaviour of adults.

*Deborah A. Harmon*

### **The underrepresentation of culturally diverse gifted students in the united states: Challenges and choices**

Culturally diverse gifted students continue to be underrepresented in gifted education programs in public schools in the United States. While the identification of culturally diverse gifted students has many barriers, the retention of culturally diverse gifted students in gifted education programs is a greater challenge. In this article, the identification and retention of culturally diverse gifted students will be examined along with recommendations for meeting the challenge.

*Kirsi Tirri*

### **Teacher for the gifted students**

In this article, an overview of the discussion concerning research on the qualities of a good teacher in general and the best teacher for the gifted students in particular were reviewed. The qualities of a good teacher in the light of current research on effective teaching were presented. The main ideas of teacher thinking research were introduced with an emphasis on teachers' pedagogical thinking. The qualities of a good online teacher in the light of current research on virtual teaching were reviewed. In addition to the desirable competencies and qualities of the teacher, teacher attitudes toward gifted students were discussed. Empirical research on teacher attitudes were presented with cross-cultural differences among teachers from different countries. Some practical recommendations were made for teacher educators on how to educate teachers for gifted learners. Furthermore, some suggestions for future research were presented.

*Tom Balchin*

### **The creative brain: evaluating processes**

This chapter is introduced by a report concerning the problems that have been found to occur when British teachers wish to convey the extent of individual students' creative productivity to school gifted education co-ordinators, but lack specific assessment tools to communicate evidence. A discussion about the present asymmetrical juxtaposition of the neuroscience and creativity research fields toward further developments in this area follows. Using the school subject design and technology as a vehicle, the use of a new research-based evaluation tool is demonstrated, with which teachers can facilitate students to describe their own creative successes. Such feedback is shown directly to assist teachers' understanding of emerging products and awareness of the creative possibilities inherent in the tasks they set.

*Wiesława Limont, Joanna Dreszer, Sylwia Bedyńska, Michael Piechowski*

### **Overexcitability and creative attitude of gifted students**

Numerous studies have shown that gifted people differ from the general public not only in their cognitive qualities but also in the motivational and emotional ones. Studying gifted and talented people, Kazimierz Dąbrowski proposed five types of overexcitability: sensual, psychomotor, emotional, imaginal and intellectual. What seems interesting are the relationships of these qualities with the dimensions of creative attitude (heuristic strategies and nonconformity) and reproductive attitude (algorithmic strategies and conformity).

The analysis of the relationships between these structures in cognitively gifted people showed that algorithmic strategies are associated with low imaginal OE, and heuristics with high imaginal and intellectual OEs. Nonconformity strongly and positively correlates with intellectual, imaginal and emotional OEs.

*Teresa Giza*

### **Fields and activities when supporting the progress of pupils at school**

The main objective of the research presented in the article were the establishing and description of conditions essential for the progress of gifted pupils at school. These were applied to a limited group of gifted pupils (N=445) listed by their teachers. The data obtained substantiates the proposed thesis concerning the acquisition of factors favourable to the progress of talents influenced by family, local community, school, and the personality of the pupil.

School does not compensate for deficiencies in family or local community, while the level of work with the gifted at school is not derived from their needs nor the predispositions recognized. The utmost level of support for the progress of gifted pupils was observed in well-equipped schools in cities, where the school intensifies the influence of the family with a rich educational package, especially for gifted pupils and in all subjects. The gifted pupils in small, not very well-equipped village schools, advance due to diligent learning, the reading of books, and their subjective attitude.

*Dorota Klus-Stańska*

### **Creative thinking of pupils: myths, misunderstandings, and opportunities**

The sociological notion of myth as a false belief was used for the folk-pedagogy analysis of pupils' creative thinking. Where such myths are shared by professionals, their durability, and schematicity, and erroneousness are dangerous and harmful. In the article reconstructed: The article reconstructs: the myth of Blue Blood – the conviction of uncommonness and uniqueness of creative talents; the Myth of Bibelot according to which creative competences belong to the "elegant" uselessness; the Myth of the Spring of Knowledge – a belief in filling a pupil with knowledge by teachers' instructing and explaining; the Myth of a Big Brother – a conviction of the need to continuously monitor and evaluate each operation of a pupil; the Myth of Glass and Eye manifesting itself in overestimation of rationality and logic; the Myth the Wise Man - a conviction that man must first learn well to be able to create; the Myth of Memory Power where the memory is treated as a principal cognitive capacity guaranteeing success; the Myth Dignity linking learning with hard, meticulous work and respect to authority; the Myth of a Solitudinarian where it is believed that the pupil should work in lonely concentration instead of talking to his/her peers in the classroom.

*Beata Dyrda*

**The developmental benefits and barriers of gifted pupils in early childhood education as a consequence of their creative and emotional potentials.**

In this article the author presents a theoretical and practical outline relating to the consequences of the creative and emotional potentials of gifted pupils at the early education stage. Gifted pupils sometimes have social problems in groups of their peers. These problems are connected with symptoms related to their creative behaviour. The conclusions drawn in the article are based on the latest research about gifted education. The author pays special attention to the importance of using special methods of teaching and motivating pupils with high levels of intelligence and creativity in contemporary schooling. In educating gifted children teachers should pay special attention to the emotional, social, cognitive and creative needs of their young pupils.

*Monika Wiśniewska-Kin*

**Cognitive capabilities of children aged 7-10**

In this work I described cognitive capabilities of children aged 7-10. To this end I used a set of cognitive capabilities by Langacker. The empirical research was conducted in four primary schools in Lodz and in the Lodz region with a group of 406 children. I showed that children have bigger cognitive capabilities than it was previously assumed in the areas of categorization, scheme creation, finding analogies and conceptualization. An important task of today's school is to stimulate students to cognitive independence. It is related to developing children's way of understanding and describing the world. The cognitive theory enables a new approach to students. From this perspective it presents the process of child's understanding of ideas. There is a possibility to research subjective ways of describing and defining the reality by children.

*Maria Groenwald*

**Gifted Students in the School's Tower of Babel**

Presenting students' problems in the context of the story of the tower of Babel makes one realise that the teachers, educators (theoreticians and practitioners), officials etc. who work with them and deal with the issue of aptitude cannot (and frequently do not wish to) reach agreement in the debates they hold with one another, whilst their varied interpretations of texts intensify a mutual misunderstanding. With the resulting situation becoming increasingly complicated, there appears the need for interpretations undertaken by specialists holding scientific knowledge as well as practical abilities, so that the rationale and arguments of the participants of such debates can be understood in a culturally and economically diversified society. However, the multiplicity of non-professional and biased interpretations makes it necessary to separate the good from the weak. The difficulty arising at attempts to resolve this issue brings forward one more solution however: the acceptance of the existence of a multiplicity of meanings through interpretation, and recognizing it not as the source of the problem, but as a manifestation of the progress of human thought, the development of which can be either supported or interrupted or even reversed by school education.

*Barbara Dudel*

**Mathematically talented student in the classroom**

Noticing and improving students' talents seems to be one of the greatest challenges for modern education. Developing the skills of talented children, including mathematically gifted ones, demands that a number of factors be taken into account. With the quality of the school environment being an essential factor in developing the child's abilities.

In this article the results of research aimed at diagnosing the social functioning of mathematically talented students in the classroom is presented. The results of the research, conducted in the third class of primary school, show that:

- Teachers claim that mathematically talented children are well prepared to function in a group and fulfill school duties.
- Talented students feel comfortable in their classes. They enjoy the company of their classmates.
- Talented students are accepted and respected by their classmates.