

Od Redakcji

Prezentowany numer „Problemów Wczesnej Edukacji” poświęcony jest alternatywnym rozwiązaniom edukacyjnym. Znaczenie tej problematyki jest oczywiste, gdyż właśnie inicjatywy oświatowe, niekonwencjonalne przedsięwzięcia, autorskie koncepcje stanowią istotny impuls dla rozwoju systemu edukacyjnego.

Zebrane artykuły zakreślają szeroki kontekst zagadnienia alternatyw: począwszy od polityki oświatowej i uwarunkowań kulturowych szkoły poprzez wybrane ważne idee dydaktyczno-wychowawcze aż po przykłady konkretnych rozwiązań. Zamieszczone teksty w swojej wymowie są wyraźnie rozpięte pomiędzy krytyką istniejącego stanu rzeczy (skostniałego systemu edukacyjnego, oporu ze strony struktur administracyjnych, skłonności do nawykowego odtwarzania zastanych schematów) a kreacją i optymizmem, otwierającymi potencjalne możliwości zmiany. Mamy nadzieję, że nośność numeru zwiększy fakt udziału w nim Autorów nie tylko z Polski, ale także z różnych krajów: Szwecji, Wielkiej Brytanii, Niemiec, Słowacji, Czech, Kanady. Możemy się również przyjrzeć analizom odnoszącym się do tak odległych rejonów, jak Chiny czy Zambia. Właśnie poszukiwanie alternatyw edukacyjnych, jak rzadko który inny temat, wręcz wymaga wsłuchania się w inspiracje pochodzące z różnych stron świata.

Jesteśmy w pełni świadome, że w pojedynczym numerze czasopisma niemożliwe jest ukazanie reprezentatywnej grupy przykładów myślenia i działania innowacyjnego. Jest to bardziej próba zaznaczenia wagi tematu i zachęta do podejmowania własnych refleksji i aktywności „pod prąd” edukacyjnych działań rutynowych.

Editorial

This present issue of "Problems of Early Education" is devoted to alternative educational solutions. The significance of this issue is obvious, because it is the educational initiatives, unconventional projects, and creative ideas that form an important impetus for the development of an educational system.

The articles collected in this issue mark a broad range of the issue of alternatives: from the educational policy and cultural determinants of school through selected important educational ideas to examples of concrete solutions. The meaning of the texts stretches explicitly between the criticism of the status quo (the fossilized educational system, the resistance of administrative structures, their tendency to habitually reproduce old patterns) and the creation and optimism which open the potential for change. We hope that the fact that not only authors from Poland have contributed to this issue, but also from other countries, such as Sweden, Great Britain, Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Canada will add to its popularity. We can also look at studies relating to very distant regions, such as China and Zambia. Like very few other topics it is the search for educational alternatives that requires intent listening to inspirations coming from different parts of the world.

We are fully aware that it is impossible to show examples of a representative group of innovative thinking and action in a single issue of a journal. This is more of an attempt to indicate the importance of the topic and an incentive to undertake one's own reflection and activity "against the tide" of educational routine operations.

W POSZUKIWANIU ALTERNATYWNYCH ROZWIĄZAŃ DLA WCZESNEJ EDUKACJI

IN SEARCH OF ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR EARLY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACTS

Bogusław Śliwerski

Educational policy as an erosion factor in the present in the creators of the alternative education of pedagogical capital

The reform of Polish education was initiated by a radical change in the social and political system –reaching various stages of development in the subsequent phases of transition. The author wonders what has happened with Polish education during that period, where does it aim, to what extent politicians bear responsibility for its present condition, and to what extent teachers are responsible. The dispute about the place and role of education and of the young generation does not disappear when a new political force comes to power, on the contrary, the need to emphasize its being different or discontented increases. We are dealing with a conflict between the supporters of autonomy, decentralisation and socialisation of education and their open or secret enemies, with an education that is appropriated by politicians for their own purposes. The result is a waste of cultural potential of teachers, pupils and their parents, and innovator teachers' "burning themselves out" in the creating of ideas for a reformed education, betrayed by politicians and tired.

Andrzej Szklarski

Patterns of educational practice in school

This article highlights a number of relevant aspects of teaching practice in school. Traditional teaching methods are compared with the progressive pedagogy, through examination of their characteristics. Some fundamental features of both traditional and progressive pedagogy are highlighted, commented on and illustrated. Three theories of learning, behaviourism, cognitivism and socio-cultural theory are also highlighted, with a focus on the relationships of these theories to traditional and progressive pedagogy. Finally, group work is presented and discussed as a support to the implementation of progressive teaching. Different types of group work are examined, with the focus on their abilities to promote the development of educational practice in school.

Stanisław Dylak

Once again about John Adcock's *nonschool* instead of school.

The author shows a contrast that exists between the Polish school and social, economic and technological changes. He argues that today we are actually dealing with a school shaped around 150-200 years ago, a school without change. Deep in reductionism underlies the Polish school (not only Polish, though). Further on the Author considers the idea and operation of the alternative English school of the future described by John Adcock in his story *In place of school. A novel plan for 21st Century* and compares Adcock's school with Ivan Illich's concept and today's school system in Poland.

Dorota Klus-Stańska

The mythology of knowledge transmission, or on the need to seek alternatives to the school which amputates reason.

A search for alternatives is always associated with dissatisfaction with the status quo and the resulting willingness to act reconstructively. Therefore, the diagnosis of this status, of its specific characteristics, weaknesses and constraints is essential for an indication of the direction of potential changes. The starting point is the article's argument about then nonobviousness of pro-developmental activity of early education and the initial blockade of children's development by the actions of the school. In order to verify this assumption three models of development of children and their learning resulting from three contemporary

scientific disciplines: sociology (among others. P. Bourdieu, B. Bernstein, M. Foucault, Z. Kwiecinski), Psychology (J. Piaget, L. Kohlberg, L.S. Wygotski, E. Erikson) and Pedagogy with the terms offered in the development of Polish early education classes were compared. Then, examples of educational problems from selected areas of early education (Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies), showing that only certain competences are developed by the school, while others are neglected, and some are "amputated" (terminated) by school, were used. The last one means that children having some important developmental competences (such as ability to intelligent thinking) lose them as a result of school activity. The developmental offer of Polish early education appears to be schematic, rigid, and infantilizing; it leads to passivity, non-reflexive thinking and giving it up altogether.

Miroslaw Patalon

Religious Education in Poland: School Catechesis or Study of Religions?

The article deals with the crisis of identity and attendance of religious lessons provided by the church in state schools. Religious education was incorporated into the school curriculum after the political changes in 1990 and from the very beginning it was subject to controversy. One of the main questions asked concerns the content of courses and the approach towards different religions and beliefs. Since Poland is predominately a Catholic country there is a strong tendency to teach religion from one theological and philosophical point of view. However, the new social and political situation (membership in a pluralistic EU) would seem to demand different solutions. The proposed dialogical approach to religious education, allows for both the keeping of denominational identity and openness to the richness of other religions.

Tomáš Jablonský

Cooperative learning – an alternative form of education

Interest in cooperative learning is connected with actual social-economic conditions, which emphasize human cooperation as a one of the most fundamental elements of effective behavior of large as well as small communities, including the behavior of the worldwide community. Educational systems which choose cooperative approaches react to the conditions and needs of society, thereby creating a power that can contribute to the solving of the serious problems of the world and the individual in the world, as well as questions of values and questions connected to social pathological phenomena.

The aim of this article is to highlight co-operative teaching as a form of effective teaching and so belie the myth that only personal breakthroughs lead to the success of the individual. The aim of the submitted report is to present basic theoretical starting points for a model of cooperative learning, as one of relevant innovative paradigms of school education.

Tom Balchin

Grouping in the Schools: Gifted Children

This paper tackles the question of the efficacy of grouping gifted children in heterogeneous groups. It uses observations from a 'design and make' tasks carried out over 2 days at a South London primary school as part of a 2-day QCA-sponsored research study. It was designed to capture information about how gifted behaviour can be evaluated and supported through design and technology (D&T) tasks in groups. A strong feature of learning in D&T from an early age is the use of small groups designing and making products; through which collaboration is the main method of problem solving. The case study, of one group from the primary school, considers the degree of control, satisfaction and cognitive 'value-added' over a group outcome that a student, nominated as talented in D&T, might be expected to attain.

Angela Horton

Critical, Creative Thinking and Group Work: Some Ideas for Discussion

In the article the author discusses the importance of social interaction in the learning process, as well as offering a number of perspectives on critical and creative thinking within the classroom context. Some of the key techniques for instigating critical and creative thinking are discussed, along with the different group structures that might be adopted. The ideas put forward are linked to practical examples, while also defining teacher and learner roles in the implementation of such techniques.

Fengling Tang

Teachers' perspectives on teaching and learning: A comparative case study in Chinese and English early years settings

This article is based on my PhD research (F.L. Tang , *A Comparative Ethnographic Case Study of the Early Years Curriculum in Chinese and English Settings*, unpublished PhD thesis, Roehampton University 2008), which was carried out between October 2004 and July 2008. The fieldwork of my research revealed both similarities and differences which are unfolding in early years practice in Chinese and English settings. The text looks particularly at teachers' perspectives on teaching and how young children learn in order to reveal what underpins early years practices in Chinese and English contexts. With the child-centred ideology prevailing in early years education and care across the world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD 2001, *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*, Paris: OECD), this paper highlights the cultural differences manifest in early years practice in the light of the comparative case study conducted in Chinese and English contexts.

Kathleen Forsythe

SelfDesign- a Learning Community for the 21st Century

This brief article discusses the SelfDesign Learning Community, a program of Wondertree Foundation for Natural Learning in British Columbia, Canada as a new educational form that is beyond schooling. Initiated in 2001 as a pilot educational project, SelfDesign Learning Community (SDLC) is considered by the Ministry of Education in British Columbia to be a "Distributed Learning School". This means that SDLC uses the Internet to link learners distributed throughout our province and living and learning at home with their families. However, characteristic of the innovative quality of the program, SelfDesign calls itself a 'learning community' and not a school. Although the program must meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education it does so by redefining many of the usual concepts that define schooling. SDLC became possible with the widespread use of the Internet. However, unlike many on-line schools, SDLC does not offer courses and course content using the Internet. Its innovative nature extends in several areas- the SelfDesign pedagogy and the knowledge architecture of its use of technology, which is grounded in a conversational epistemology. As an innovative educational program, SDLC won the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2006, the highest award for education in Canada.

Ilona Katharina Schneider, Franz Oberländer, Zoltan Tóth, Eva Dobó-Tarai, Ibolya Revák-Markóczy

Scientific Learning in Primary School Education – a Model Study on Children's Concepts of Physical Material

This research on children's learning processes in the development of concepts of physical material included five first grade classes. It applied the *Rostock Model*, centering on water. Qualitative evaluation was achieved by comparative analysis based on the Grounded Theory. It proved, that in classroom instruction children's knowledge of the location of water as well as their cognitive concepts of its particle structure seem to be universal.

Mária Matulčíková

The Mathetics of J. A .Komenský as a New Phase in the Development of Alternative Education and Inspiration for School and Educational Reforms

The article deals with the problems of innovations in the theory and practice of education and instruction. It elucidates the theoretical concept of mathetics as presented by J. A. Komenský and analyzes concrete examples from the practice of education in primary and secondary schools. It outlines the possibilities for the development of general didactics, paediatrics, and a theory of school reforms.

Angela Horton

How can outdated textbooks be used as part of an inquiry approach to learning?

The Author addresses the use of outdated textbooks as sources of information that quickly becomes outdated. She then moves on to explore the nature of knowledge and the nature of learning followed by valuable advice for teachers (and for learners) as regards working within a constructivist framework. The article concludes with the issue of meeting individual student needs through differentiating the learning contexts and learning tasks.

Joanna Gruchata

Teacher's ideas for books for children in Poland and Denmark

The aim of the article is to describe how early education teachers perceive several areas of children's books. The research was conducted by interviews with Polish and Danish teachers. The study has shown a number of essential aspects of the concepts of children's books that the teachers possess. There are some differences in the Polish and Danish teachers' attitudes towards the functions of books, the topics considered as appropriate and taboo topics in children's literature, the teachers' concepts of illustrations. An interesting result of the analysis is that the teachers generally ignore children's need of play and entertainment.

Martin Blaszk

Happening as an Educational Experience: Early Education

What is happening? How does it exist in the practice of art and how might it be applied in education, especially early education? In order to answer these questions this paper will first of all define happening in the sphere of art. It will then look at how the characteristics of happening make it suitable as an approach to be used in education. Following on from this, it will look at one application of happening in early education. This paper will also argue that because of its multiplicity of expressive means, the nature of participation it proposes, and its involvement of the individual, rather than being an alternative to mainstream education it actually fulfills a number of that system's present day aims.

Joanna Garbula-Orzechowska

Freinet's techniques in constructing children's historical knowledge

Knowledge can be obtained during cultural transmission or it can be constructed individually by the child. Children can be particularly active in constructing knowledge related to microhistory. Elementary school pupils can be helped in constructing knowledge of history

if aided with techniques designed by Célestin Freinet, and especially the free text technique. The aim of this study is to present applications of Freinet's techniques in constructing the history of a child's family. The study involved third and fourth grade pupils of primary school. The tests comprised: execution of the project 'History of my family' among third graders, and analysis of texts 'History of my family' among fourth graders. Conclusions: The free text techniques designed by Freinet encourage pupils to construct their knowledge of history in the sphere of microhistory. Subjects dealt with in free texts concern events or series of events related to the history of their families which pupils consider important.

Dorota Klus-Stańska

The establishment of the alternative Primary School 'Żak' in Olsztyn – a number of comments concerning this experimental environment for both learners and teachers.

The article presents how an alternative school was established and run by the author over 8 years, including examples of its realization. It concentrates especially upon those elements of the school's functioning that were at a remove from the reality of traditional educational practices in Poland: individualization, action research carried out by children, respect of the individual pupil's knowledge and their right to learn through their own chosen strategies, work in small groups, the right to communicate with other learners, the right to ask questions, autonomous learning and civic competence.

Maria Kreft

Educational possibilities for socially excluded communities – the Radio School in Chikuni Mission in Zambia

There are places in the world where traditional Western forms of education are absent due to poverty. Modern technology enables education in such areas. Chikuni is a place where people educate themselves and their children in seventeen IRI Centres (Interactive Radio Instruction). Teachers use radio to communicate their lessons to community audiences. Students learn under trees since they lack school buildings and other facilities normally associated with school. In spite of the obstacles the schooling process encounters, its beneficial effects are demonstrated through the increase in literacy, raised awareness of the AIDS campaign and development of other community projects, as well as giving the possibility of a public voice.

Maria Klawa

Primary school in Robledo de Chavela – diary fragment from a study visit to Spain

The article is a free wheeling tale arising out of two short stays in a Spanish school. Its aim is not simply to describe Spanish early education, but rather to expose those characteristics of child education which are different to those known to us in Polish young learner classes.

Małgorzata Karczmarzyk

A big art for little children

The title of this article arised from the need to say something about art in an elementary Polish school. Suggestions, which were inspired by an American education and mainly by a few selected art-books such as: A Magical Day with Matisse by Julie and Suzanne Bober, Frida by Jonah Winter and The Kids, Multicultural Art Book by Alexandra M. Terzian.

Alena Vališová

Review of: Mária Matulčíková, *Reformatory pedagogical and alternative schools and their contribution for the school reform*. Bratislava 2007, AG Musica Liturgica.