

Numer specjalny

SZEŚCIOLATKI DO SZKÓŁ – FAKTY, POLEMIKI, EMOCJE

SIX-YEAR-OLDS TO SCHOOL - FACTS, POLEMICS, EMOTIONS

## **Od Redakcji**

Numer specjalny „Problemów Wczesnej Edukacji” powstał z inicjatywy Zespołu Edukacji Elementarnej, działającego przy Komitecie Nauk Pedagogicznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Zespół skupia grono pedagogów akademickich z całego kraju. Tytuł numeru „Sześciolatki do szkół – fakty, polemiki, emocje” wskazuje, że jest on wyrazem udziału w debacie społecznej, jaka toczy się od wielu miesięcy wokół ministerialnej decyzji o obniżeniu wieku szkolnego. Wdrażana obecnie reforma wzbudziła falę polemik, kontrowersji i protestów, ukazując głęboki rozdźwięk między projektami administracji oświatowej a oczekiwaniami społecznymi. Po raz pierwszy inicjatywa MEN spotkała się z tak ostrym sprzeciwem ze strony rodziców, konsolidując ich w ruch społeczny na tyle silny, że stał się zdolny do zwolnienia tempa reformy. Z jednej strony dowodzi to postępujących w naszym kraju procesów demokratyzacyjnych i wzrostu obywatelskości społeczeństwa, z drugiej pokazuje ryzyko zarnowania tych zmian, jakie tworzone jest przez niechęć Ministerstwa do słuchania głosu społecznego.

Zespół Edukacji Elementarnej, z którego wywodzi się większość autorów niniejszego numeru, podziela niepokoje rodziców i wielu nauczycieli. Stąd też w numerze specjalnym znajdujemy liczne uwagi krytyczne, piętrzące się wątpliwości i pytania. Wiele tu też emocji, bo niedostatki projektu reformy, nieudana podstawa programowa, niekonsekwencje decyzyjne w zderzeniu z tak ważną kwestią, jak edukacja najmłodszych, muszą te emocje wywoływać.

Nasze czasopismo stwarza możliwość zabrania głosu przez osoby reprezentujące różne stanowiska i wywodzące się z różnych środowisk zawodowych. Dlatego autorzy zamieszczonych tu tekstów nie mówią jednym głosem. Odnoszą się do różnych kwestii i czasem zupełnie odmiennie je oceniają. Sądzimy, że to właśnie stanowi wartość debat społecznych.

## **Editorial**

This special issue of "Problems of early education" has been created at the initiative of the Elementary Education Team, working within the Pedagogical Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The team brings together a group of university teachers from all over the country. The title of this issue, "Six-year-olds to school - facts, polemics, emotions", points out that it is an expression of social participation in the debate which for several months has taken place about the ministerial decision to lower the school age. The currently implemented reform has aroused a wave of polemics, controversies, and protests, revealing a deep gap between government projects and the society's educational expectations. For the first time, the Ministry's initiative met with so sharp an opposition of the parents, consolidating them in a social movement so strong that has become capable of slowing down the pace of the reform. On the one hand, this testifies to the ongoing processes of citizenship awareness in our country and growth democratization of the society and, on the other hand, it shows the risk of squandering the change that is created by the reluctance of the Ministry to hear the voice of the society.

The opinion of the Elementary Education Group, from which the majority of authors of this issue come, shares the concerns of many parents and teachers. Therefore, in this special issue, a number of criticisms, doubts and questions can be found. Many emotions are there, too, because the shortcomings of this reform proposals, the failed core curriculum, the inconsistencies in decision-making as regards such an important issue as very early education, must arouse such emotions.

Our journal gives an opportunity to speak by persons representing various positions and coming from a variety of professional backgrounds. Therefore, the authors of these texts do not present one view. They refer to various issues and sometimes evaluate them completely differently. We believe that this constitutes the true value of public debates.

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## **Abstracts**

### ***Józefa Bałachowicz***

#### **Evaluation of a new basis of the curriculum for grades 1 to 3 in the light of the subjective education model**

The author of the article analyses and evaluates the new basis of the curriculum for primary classes 1-3, according to an individual educational model. The essence of this model in child's education is to support personal development, the maximizing of personal potential and the evolution of individual needs, with the proviso that this should be done in the appropriate social conditions and in a valuable way. The new basis of the curriculum does not fulfill these assumptions and is another incorrectly formulated educational document that will only create a new school reality for the young learner.

### ***Danuta Waloszek***

#### **The reform of children's education in Poland- a landscape in the fog**

The changes in education relating to children of preschool age, are directed at giving greater opportunities, but this vision can only be realized by society if it is clearly methodologically described. Every single mistake in intention or imperfection in the conditions of its realization jeopardizes its efficiency and gives society another set of unrealistic solutions. For change to succeed it must be broadly described and in some depth in relation to a) innovation, b) transformation, c) interchange, d) modification, e) repair, etc. If there is no preamble describing the main aims of the reforms then the document will make no sense.

MEN's suggested changes, which consider relocating 6 year olds, and even younger children, lacks the necessary methodological order, as well as containing essential mistakes. The way of introducing change (as a process) and obtaining real effect is through 1) the reasonableness of the change in relation to past, critical and deliberate opinion, 2) showing the new ideas

as a better and more widely explained phenomenon in education, 3) revealing the need for change, as well as, 4) reasons of culture and civilization for a new and modern form of educating children. Change effected in society as education, must gain the acceptance of those people to whom it is addressed. The reforms in compulsory education have not received the acceptance of either teachers or parents, implemented, as it were, in spite of the will of most of its recipients, most likely ending in yet another revolution. The Ministry Of Education, avoiding public discussion about change and suggestions concerning modifications, creates a closed circle, which harms the changes that need to take place concerning the problem of progress of preschool children, with respect to their development and educational needs.

*Elżbieta Putkiewicz*

**The structure of care and educational institutions for young children in OECD countries**

The author presents a brief account of the care and educational institutions for young children in OECD countries based upon analysis of the reports of Starting Strong I and Starting Strong II.

*Grażyna Szyling*

**“With the Language of Requirements” - Remarks on the New Core Curriculum for Early Education**

The inspiration to the ruminations presented in the text has been drawn from the declaration that the new core curriculum for general education had been written with „the language of educational outcomes”. The author attempts here to specify the semantic field of that concept, this being done through an analysis of a ministerial document, particularly of its usefulness to the teacher’s diagnosing of student achievements.

The train of thought followed in the analysis of the issue in question has been delineated by the three aspects: (1) the consequences of the regulatory role of the function of the core curriculum for classroom assessment, particularly that of the formative type; (2) the influence of particularization and operationalisation of aims over the quality of feedback on learning outcomes; (3) the tensions caused by the concept of one-stratum requirements, strengthened by a hidden standard.

The conclusions reached have shown a limited diagnostic potential of the core curriculum, which in its current form neither ensures highly reliable external verification of achievements of pupils completing the first stage of their education, nor does it guarantee a valid diagnosis conducted by the teachers.

*Iwona Kopaczyńska, Agnieszka Nowak-Łojewska, Agnieszka Olczak*

**Desensitizing School – A Research Report on School Preparations to Implement Curriculum Reform**

The article aims at evaluating how ready Polish schools are to implement the reform intending to introduce 6-year-olds to compulsory schooling. The diagnosis is presented in two aspects: the material and economic and the factual. The theoretical basis for the interpretation is from data collected in surveys, while the critical analysis of the curriculum is informed by the concepts of J. Piaget, J. Bruner, L. Vygotski and B. Bernstein, which belong to the constructive model of education. The article is divided into two parts. Part one describes the organizational and educational side of school and is based on data gathered in surveys carried out in schools in Zielona Góra in December 2008. Part two describes the factual conditions relating to schools such as educational goals, teaching content, integration in education, assessment, textbooks and teachers' preparations, in light of the new

curriculum and psychological and sociocultural theories. The conclusion includes the author's serious doubts concerning the quality of early school education.

*Dorota Klus-Stańska, Marzenna Nowicka*

**The readiness of primary schools in relation to the lowering of the school starting age. Olsztyn as an example.**

The implementation of the reforms to the schooling system in Poland need to recognize the level of readiness of schools to include children who will be starting their compulsory school education at six years of age. In the paper the level of preparation is analyzed in such areas as: finance, premises, and pedagogical staff. The results show the unreality of the Minister's demands and their inadequacy to the actual conditions prevailing in schools. They also indicate a discrepancy between the optimism of the school authorities based in the city and moderate pessimism of the actual directors of schools.

*Martin Blaszk*

**It's not (only) what you say, it's the way that you say it: the new bases of the curricula for preschool and the first class of primary.**

The latter part of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 have seen changes in the bases of the curricula in Poland and proposals for changes in the English national curriculum. This paper will consider the recently released bases of the curricula in Poland for preschool and the first class of primary, in light of some of the criticism that has been leveled at them. It will also compare these curricula to the English national curriculum, key stage one, in an attempt to outline the factors that have to be considered when creating such a document, including content, wording, quantity and layout, so as to ensure clarity and understanding on behalf of the reader. Finally, it will try to draw some conclusions as to what makes a document of this type effective.

*Małgorzata Żytka*

**6-year old children at school - a controversial subject**

This paper is a discussion upon the reform of early education in Poland, especially the lowering of the school starting age. It contains a critical analysis of the new basis of the curriculum for children from 6 to 8 prepared by Ministry of Education. The paper also presents teachers' opinions on the changes in elementary education.

*Janina Uszyńska-Jarmoc*

**The mystification of the development of child support in the school program reform**

The paper encourages people to consider and undertake a wide ranging social discussion concerning the practicalities relating to the realization of the main educational goals of sixyear olds being first grade pupils in primary school. The statutory document for teachers, "the basis of the curriculum for general education within primary schools" states that "the aim of early school education is to support the child in his or her intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, physical and esthetic development". I will try to prove that including the educational aims in the regulations does not guarantee their realization, and simulating a humanistic support for development, at the level of documentation, does not give teachers the chance for a true realization of the stipulated goals. In this situation the goal becomes an empty slogan or myth. In the paper the conditions that would give true support for the child's development at school are provided, so that this situation can become a fact and not remain a myth.

*Dorota Bronk*

**"Come on little child, I shall teach you " - a real or pseudo - reform of education in Poland ?**

The main aim of recent educational reform in Poland is to "equalize the educational opportunities" by lowering the school age from 7 to 6 years and, according to the government, to adjust the educational system in Poland to the European standards. That is only partly true, because such standards simply do not exist and the "equal educational opportunity" argument seems doubtful as long as the pre-school education remains neglected. Moreover, there is also a significant lack of adequately qualified teaching staff in order to implement the reform. In short, the evaluation of the educational reform in Poland is difficult. For sure, the philosophy of permanent change, very useful in the market economy itself, does not meet all the challenges of education with stress put on continuity and responsibility for each young individual. The reform, based rather on wishes and declarative aims than on desired skills, leads teachers and children to unnecessary confusion and uncertain final results.

*Monika Wiśniewski-Kin*

**"Ring-a-ring o'roses, a pocket full of posies..." - the trivialization of pre-school education in the basis of the curriculum**

This paper adds a personal voice to the debate surrounding the recent reforms in Polish education. It is that of an academic teacher unhappy about the changes in the quality of education for very young learners, due to the reform, in effect carried out in a political context. The paper will concentrate on the fourteenth section of the basis for preschool educational activity, as well as the contents concerning the areas of reading and writing.

*Agnieszka Spikert*

**Restlessness caused the programmatic reform**

The author performed the reflections about the programmatic reform modifications. She presented parents and teachers apprehensions evoked with decrease of scholar age decision. The author undertook the explanation and calming trial of some anxieties.

*Małgorzata Kwiatkowska-Góralczyk*

**Who should teach six-year old children in first class?**

This paper is addressed to teachers of six year olds, who are about to enter their classrooms and face their new students very soon. The important elements they are going to face are outlined.

*Dorota Klus-Stańska, Marzenna Nowicka*

**The new basis of the curriculum for young learners as an expression of the pedagogical culture of the Ministry of Education**

The text adds to the discussion on the new basis of the curriculum for preschools in Poland. The authors assess the quality of the document critically, showing the developmental inadequacy of the standards contained within it, their incoherence, and selectiveness. They treat it as a symptom of the pedagogical culture of the Polish Ministry of Education which they term a culture of the absurd. Such a culture is characterised by the following features: colloquial language, an inability to maintain consistent reasoning, and a tendency towards regulations which are selective and separated from an actual context. The new basis is selfevidently a rash project whose pedagogical value is more than doubtful.

*Ewa Zalewska*

**The new basis of the curriculum for primary education – the foundation for a new level of quality or a new level of mediocrity?**

The new basis, which according to its authors was to implement positive changes in primary education, could actually result in regression, in relation to the level of education being offered. The basis of the curriculum is a document without any theoretical basis, written using colloquial language, incoherent and too broad in its intentions. All of this generates serious doubts as far as its essential values and application are concerned.

*Teresa Neckar-Ilnicka*

**Dilemmas relating to the teacher's role and duties in the context of young learners.**

In the article the issue of young learner and teacher roles and duties are analyzed in the context of the curricular changes presented by the Ministry of Education. From analysis of the basis of the curriculum of general education (1<sup>st</sup> stage), a definition of the expectations towards the teacher as the most important agent in the process of teaching and child learning (and a competent partner in mutual relations with the children's parents) is attempted. The discussion entered upon is part of a general social debate on young learner education policy revised in connection with the planned lowering of the school starting age.