Editorial

Dear readers,

The current issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* sets forth some interesting topics that are addressed by authors from Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian educational settings.

Danijela Makovec presents her recent empirical research on the *dimensions of teachers' professional development*. Makovec examined the conceptions of a teacher's role in planning and executing instruction, emphasizing that such function cannot be either simply defined or reduced to single isolated factor. On the basis of her theoretical and empirical analysis, the author unraveled three intertwining areas that determine the complexity of a teacher's role: subject-related excellence, didactic excellence, and pedagogic excellence. A teacher's subject excellence is understood as having a comprehensive knowledge and broad understanding of his or her subject area. In this sense, an educator's duty is first and foremost determined by his or her content-related professionalism. Nevertheless, mere mastery of a specific subject area is insufficient; adequately performing roles necessitates that teachers acquire didactic excellence, which enables them to effectively communicate knowledge to students, and pedagogic excellence, which empowers them to perform moral educational tasks that are related to the cultivation of students as human beings.

The importance of moral education in school settings is also evident in the next paper, written by **Marija Buterin Mičić** to describe her exploration into the *determinants of student attitudes toward cultural diversity in schools*. The author began her contribution by asserting that education is traditionally thought of as the fundamental integrative factor of society but that the realization of this function becomes questionable given the existence of separate forms of education for national minorities. Buterin Mičić emphasized that even though the goal of existing forms of national minority education is to clear the way for implementing the right to preserve and foster minority languages and cultures, attendance in separate schools and classes contributes nothing to the integration of minority students or the encouragement of interethnic contact. To gain empirical insight into this matter, the author investigated whether students' gender, ethnic status, and school achievement, the educational levels of their parents, and some other relevant factors predict their attitudes toward the school integration of members of different ethnic groups. Her results showed that multicultural attitudes are the best determinants of attitudes regarding school integration and assimilation.

The succeeding paper, authored by **Maja Brust Nemet**, deals with the question of *correlation between teachers' social and pedagogical competences and school culture*. Brust Nemet initially highlighted the fact that social and pedagogical

competencies mold a teacher's ability to respond to the demands of contemporary trends in education only if these competencies are successfully combined. The author averred that the personality of a teacher is an important factor that liberates, evokes students' enthusiasm, stimulates creativity and self-perfection, suppresses anxiety, and creates a motivating intellectual atmosphere. By means of empirical research, she inquired into whether a correlation exists (and if there is, in what direction it moves) between the socio-pedagogical competences of a school teacher and the culture of a school. Unsurprisingly, the results evinced a statistically significant relationship between these two factors. The author also underlined that formal education, lifelong learning, and family relations exert the greatest influence on acquiring social and pedagogical competences and that the quality of communication, cooperation, and collegiality have the strongest effects on school culture.

One of the traits that defines a successful teacher is his or her creativity, as can be deduced from the article of **Anna Kožuh**, who reflected on *creativity as a didactic challenge of a modern teacher*. She underscored areas of mutual connections and dependencies between the creativity and didactic competency of a teacher. The text showcases an analysis designed to thoroughly discuss the essence of a creative attitude and explore creativity as an essential element of effective teaching strategies. As claimed by Kožuh, the need to equip teachers with the ability to take up creative actions in education and expect creative attitudes from their students results from the conviction that learning to be creative cannot be accomplished in ways other than participation in creative activities. In other words, theories related to and knowledge regarding the principles of creative activity are inadequate to engender a student's capability to solve problems in an imaginative fashion. From this perspective, the necessity of modifying the content of teacher training concepts and the process of continuous development should also be considered.

The next paper empirically illuminates the question of *teachers', parents', and students' attitudes toward private and alternative schools in Serbia*. The authors, **Slađana Zuković** and **Jovana Milutinović**, preliminarily noted that school pluralism develops alongside political pluralism. In education, this means that apart from schools that are established and funded by the state, compulsory schools may also be set up by certain groups of citizens, citizens' and teachers' associations, religious communities, and local governments and other legal entities. In this context, the authors realized that openness toward the development of school pluralism is still at the very beginning in the Republic of Serbia and concluded that it is very important to continuously inform parents about private and alternative schools, as well as future teachers and other education professionals through their initial training and as part of their continuing professional development.

Special attention should likewise be paid to the last two empirical papers: one written by **Anna Alajbeg** and another written by **Mirjana Radetić-Paić**.

Alajbeg presents her findings on the *correlation between the level of victimization and the quality of family interaction, school attachment, and social self-efficacy*.

As emphasized by the author, research showed that many children and young people are involved in both traditional and electronic forms of peer violence. Children who experience peer violence are at a greater risk of developing health, emotional, and school problems than those who are not victimized. The author statistically confirmed a negative correlation between the quality of family interaction and the level of victimization, a negative correlation between school bonding and fear of school with the level of victimization, and a negative correlation between social self-efficacy and the level of victimization. These results can serve as a valuable starting point for further research, especially that on predicting the role of victims in peer violence.

Radetić-Paić directed her attention to *university students' risky behaviors and their progression rate* to determine the correlation between these variables. The author defined risky behaviors as those that potentially expose young people to harm or significant risks of harm, which then prevent them from reaching their potential in learning and advancement in the widest sense. She gathered empirical data from Croatian students by administering part of the American standardized National College Health Risk Behavior Survey. The author found that students' progression rate can be significantly correlated with the risky consumption of alcohol and marijuana but that no correlation could be statistically ascertained with respect to the other questionnaire items that describe risky behaviors.

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Editor-in-Chief