

Changes in education - from pre-school education to adult education

This year's copy of the *Sodobna pedagogika* (the Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies) provides the readers of the journal with thematically various articles. Still, they all have a common issue - the analysis of changes having occurred in the last few years in the area of our educational system. The succession of the published articles follows the educational vertical, from the article treating the area of pre-school education to the articles dealing with the area of adult education. They are followed by the articles written by foreign authors, who represent changes which have occurred in their educational systems (Croatia, Slovakia and Czech Republic) after some major socio-political changes. In the last part of the journal, we have published texts which thematically cross the whole educational vertical. In these texts, the authors treat the topic which is present at all educational levels. In the introductory wording, we are going to briefly present only the articles which, according to our opinion, represent the basic outline of changes at particular level of the educational system. We are also going to try to expose the thread of ideas common to all published articles.

When we invited the authors of the published articles to prepare articles for this thematic journal copy, we wrote down that the area of education in the Slovene space had suffered radical systemic and programmatic changes as well as curricular changes. We mostly emphasized changes which occurred in our space after the conceptual project of education (The White Book on Education 1995) had been prepared, in the mid-nineties of the previous century. It was followed by systemic (legislation from the area of education 1996) and contents reform of our educational system (1999) as well as further gradual introduction of changes into the educational system. Between changes which occurred in the last period, there are some changes which intervened in the educational system, without originating from the existing conceptual legislative. Moreover, they were neither (publically) professionally founded nor were they given a suitable public discussion or proceedings. Regarding some solutions, fundamental professional arguments from public discussions as well as some consensual definitions of profession were overlooked. Therefore, we invited the authors to analyse in their articles the existing systemic solutions, as well as organisational, programmatic and curricular changes, respectively, on the whole educational vertical - from pre-school education to adult education. We asked them to professionally evaluate the accepted solutions which have been implemented into particular levels of the educational system in the last few years. In addition, we asked them for the analysis of their professional argumentation, emphasizing that we were mostly interested in the effects produced by these solutions and in the influence that these effects exerted on accessibility, quality, justice and efficiency of the system.

And what are the answers in this direction, offered by particular published texts? In the article entitled *'Kindergartens in Modern Concepts of Childhood and Learning'*, changes in the area of pre-school education are systematically treated by L. Marjanovič Umek. The woman author exposes the thesis that the reform of the educational system, including the reform of kindergartens, which was carried out in the mid-nineties of the previous century, was integrated into political, social and economical changes of that time in Slovenia. On the other hand, it was integrated into the establishment of some new theoretical paradigms and into the conceptualisation of particular sub-systems. The woman author emphasizes that it has been more than fifteen years since some of the changes in the area of pre-school education were carried out. She states that, according to the estimation of experts from the area of education, kindergarten and school systems 'are getting old' relatively quickly. Consequently, after approximately ten or fifteen years, the solutions (at least some of them), at the level of theoretical concepts as well as at the level of their carrying out into practice, are usually out of date. This is also the period in which, on the basis of the evaluation of the educational system and the results of professional and research work in this area, the government should acquire a sufficient number of contents and methodologically valid results of the system's and particular sub-systems' functioning, respectively, as well as the estimation of critical factors in the system. The author believes that the school reform, such as it was more than fifteen years ago, cannot be completely restored, especially regarding its complete methodological and logistic realization. However, this does not release the policy from the order of a new White Book on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, especially if it wants to avoid further particular changes, corrigenda and supplementing the system. Due to insufficient professional argumentation and / or mutual incoherence, they make particular sub-systems and the system of education as a whole more and more incoherent. Her thesis is supported also by the results of rare empirical researches, which were conducted in Slovene kindergartens, the analysis of international recommendations for the area of pre-school education and the analysis of the classification of our kindergartens into postmodern concepts of childhood and education. In her article, the author restores the issue and the frame for consideration about changes, which should be followed by the whole educational vertical.

In the article entitled *'General Matura in Slovene Space: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow'*, V. Bucik emphasizes that general matura should be a necessary and sufficient condition for matriculation. In the text, the author presents a comprehensive insight into the development of the general matura and its current condition, offering consideration about its further development and improvement. Between the ideas of improving and changing the general matura, we can trace also the author's view of the idea of one (common) matura (general and vocational). He believes that the idea should be taken into consideration since it is unacceptable to the present form. In other words, there are two kinds of education, serving different purposes. The basic role of the general matura is preparing students for further education at the university level, whereas the

basic role of the vocational matura is qualifying students for a vocation or for further education at the higher professional level. Therefore, it is very difficult to conceptually unite these two main objectives. It would be worth considering the possibility of one general structure, having different sub-committees for the general and vocational matura.

Regarding the emphasis on the transformed function of the general matura, which can be found in J. Mursak's article, entitled *'The Vocational Identity Crisis: The Role of Vocational and Professional Education'*, V. Bucik's idea makes sense. J. Mursak exposes the increasing role of secondary professional education and secondary vocational education, which is the preparation for further education. This can be proved also by collected data about students' movements in the system and on the transition into postsecondary and tertiary level.

Therefore, we may question the sense of the qualification function for vocational work, and consequently, since they are connected, also the sense of planned vocational socialization of the young in vocational and professional education. The preparation for the beginning of work and consequently, the anticipatory vocational socialization, which vocational and professional education include as one of considerable views of the development of vocational identity and vocational education, are getting questionable. Not only because they prepare students for present and not for perspective vocational environment, but also because educational currents reveal that the segment of vocational and especially professional education is increasingly occupying the function of further education, instead of the preparation for beginning of work. From this point of view, secondary professional education and its function demand in-depth consideration, since secondary professional education is increasingly acquiring the function of the preparation for further study.

In the article entitled *'Systemic Managing of Adult Education'*, S. Jelenc Krasovec and S. Kump give the assessment of the situation in the area of organizing adult education, founded on the existing researches and the analysis of different political documents. They estimate the adult education situation in Slovenia, from the point of view of systemic measures. They are especially interested in their fulfilment in six crucial areas, namely their placement into the whole education system, legislation, management, and financing, network of doers and programmes, and infrastructure. They believe that the basic and essential item, representing theoretically as well as practically the broadest issue for the improvement of the systemic situation of adult education in Slovenia, wants adult education to be treated as an equal and equivalent part of the educational system. This is also the crucial issue for systemic managing of all other areas of systemic organization of adult education. The woman authors estimate that despite the declarative policy's approval of equality of education areas in documents and acts, adult education is still treated unequally, in a fragmented way and as »an addition« to the education area of children and young people. In the current education system, adult education and consequently andragogics are mistakenly equalized to the education of children and young people (and

pedagogy). Besides, it is treated mostly as a scholarized and institutionalized area and as an addition to the existing possibilities of initial education. However, in this way, we lose the essential elements of the area, which result from the diversity and variety of adults' needs. Therefore, they suggest that the adult education area should be systemically arranged. However, the first step towards this suggestion is the agreement about conceptual questions.

The texts, written by the authors presenting in their articles the changes in the education area in Croatia, Slovakia and Czech Republic, show a very diverse image. They enable us to have an insight into the situation in the area of changes in the education systems of the countries close to us, since in the recent history we lived in the same or similar socio-political system. According to M. Matijević, there have been no considerable changes in school system in Croatia since the attainment of the independence of the Republic of Croatia (1991), because the agreement about changes has not been reached in the parliament. However, the ministers responsible for the education area tried to carry out different projects of the inner reformation of school system, which did not produce any desirable effects. According to the author, the school system in Croatia is in a stalemate position and should have a right to bigger changes than the ones that have (not) been happening in the last eighteen years. In the article of M. Matulcikova we can find just the opposite situation, since the education system in Slovakia is constantly changing. At the moment it is in the beginning of carrying out some radical reform changes. However, the problem is that these changes are supposed to be introduced into the system of elementary and secondary education without sufficient preparation of teachers. Moreover, the legislator has not provided any answers to some questions raised by general expert public during the introduction of changes. The school system in the Czech Republic has experienced many changes in comparison to the school system in the period of socialism. As J. Lorenzova shows, Czech expert and political public is very agitated because of differentiation in the education system. The common elementary school lasts for five years. Then pupils differentiate, attending different types of secondary schools. Early exterior differentiation of pupils raises many questions and polemics regarding inclusive atmosphere and equal possibilities of pupils in Czech school system.

The articles published in this copy prove the well-known fact that educational systems are subjected to constant changing. If we focus only on Slovene space, we can find out that there have been many changes in the last few years. However, the common standpoint of all writers is that some solutions and changes, respectively, in the education space, have not been entered on the basis of results achieved by means of evaluation studies. Moreover, the analysis of the published texts reveals that it is difficult to find professional confirmations for the foundation of the performed changes, which would influence accessibility, quality and efficiency. On the contrary. If we focus only on higher accessibility and justice of education, we can notice that several articles reveal the picture of accessibility and justice which is not satisfying. These articles show that in order to assure better accessibility and justice of education, we should scrutinize

the accessibility of kindergartens to parents with low education and children coming from socially and culturally less stimulating environment. Furthermore, we should also find the answer to the question why children from such environment are less successful at school and what the continuation of their education is like. S. Jelenc Krasovec and S. Kump prove with data that the accessibility to education and thus also justice represent a remarkable problem also in the area of adult education. And what is the situation like concerning children with special needs? Kindergartens and schools have certainly become more accessible to the education of this population, but the article of Matej Rovsek shows that practice and some findings reveal that many pupils with special needs are directed to unsuitable and usually too demanding programmes. This certainly does not contribute to the higher level of education justice for this population of children.

Because of everything written up to this point, we can conclude this writing with the idea that in Slovene space, we need consideration about how to conceptualize the education system which will function as protective factors for particular groups of children, especially for children from less stimulating social, economical and cultural environment, foreign-language children and children with special needs. Besides, it should enable all children, young people and adults to achieve excellence. Therefore, we need consideration about how to restore and keep such an education system which will ensure accessibility, quality, justice and efficiency of education to all population in the process of education.

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Editor of thematic copy